

GLIMPSES OF THE CHRIST

Sermons from
the Gospels



Jarl K. Waggoner
Editor

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Cover: A gathering storm on the Sea of Galilee.
Photo courtesy of Reed Waggoner.

The contributors dedicate this book to the memory of the following colleagues and classmates, who faithfully labored in the work of the gospel till the day they were promoted to glory.

S. Herbert Bess
Herman Hoyt
David Plaster
Charles R. Smith

James L. Boyer
Ted Legg
Tom Sharp
Bob Wiedeman

Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	7
	<i>Contributors</i>	11
1.	Human Dilemmas—Heavenly Answers (Matt. 1:18-25)..... <i>Jarl K. Waggoner</i>	15
	*The True Message of Christmas	22
	<i>John C. Whitcomb</i>	
2.	The Temptation of Jesus (Matt. 4:1-10)	25
	<i>John French</i>	
	*Prophecies of Christ.....	34
	<i>Tom Triggs</i>	
3.	A Miracle of Forgiveness (Mark 2:1-12)	37
	<i>John French</i>	
	*Jewish Religious Parties Mentioned in the Gospels	45
	<i>Jarl K. Waggoner</i>	
4.	Power Play (Mark 4:35–5:43)	46
	<i>Lee Compson</i>	
5.	Jesus' First Lesson on Prayer (Matt. 5:43-48).....	58
	<i>Jarl K. Waggoner</i>	
6.	The Meaning of Forgiveness (Luke 7:36-50)	65
	<i>Ike Graham</i>	
	*Jesus Was a Jew	76
	<i>James P. Coffey</i>	
7.	How's Your Heart? (Matt. 13:4-9, 18-23)	82
	<i>Tom Triggs</i>	
8.	Christ Will Build His Church (Matt. 16:18).....	91
	<i>Richard L. Mayhue</i>	

9.	What Jesus Requires of You (Luke 9:18-26)	102
	<i>Ike Graham</i>	
	* <i>Proskunēō</i> and the Deity of Christ in Matthew's Gospel	113
	<i>Robert B. Lanning</i>	
10.	God Will Save Sinners (Mark 10:17-22)	116
	<i>Richard L. Mayhue</i>	
11.	I Am the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:17-27).....	130
	<i>Ivan French</i>	
12.	The Universal Enemy (John 11:1-44)	144
	<i>Michael Hontz</i>	
13.	The Great Intercessory Prayer (John 17:1-21).....	160
	<i>Ivan French</i>	
	*Four Miracles at the Cross	175
	<i>Robert B. Lanning</i>	
14	The One Foolproof Evidence (Matt. 28:1-15).....	178
	<i>Ernie Godshall</i>	
	*The Roman Guard at the Empty Tomb	187
	<i>Robert B. Lanning</i>	
	*Christianity's Gibraltar: Christ's Resurrection	191
	<i>Richard L. Mayhue</i>	

Preface

Some years ago I visited the Boston Public Library, the oldest public library in the United States. On display in the archives room at that time were some of the first books brought to the American shores, as well as some of the first books published in the Colonies. Given our country's rich Christian history, I was not surprised to see many books (maybe the majority) that were explicitly Christian in nature. There were many Bibles, of course, as well as many hymnals. And somewhat to my surprise, there were also a large number of sermon collections. In fact, it struck me that the sermon collections seemed to outnumber strictly theological works.

Upon reflection, however, I recalled that it was sermons that God the Holy Spirit used to initiate the First Great Awakening. Yes, those sermons grew out of serious theological study and understanding—just read Jonathan Edwards, for example—but sermons were the means of spiritual awakening. And why should we be surprised by this? Sermons are what communicate the great theological truths to the masses. They are the means of urging acceptance and compliance with the demands of Scripture—and this has not changed! Even in an era when sermons too often have been replaced with “conversations” and watered-down snippets designed to appeal to an impatient, make-it-easy culture in which the word *commitment* raises eyebrows as if it were foreign to our language, sermons—biblical, passionate, powerful sermons—are still the primary means God uses to convert, teach, and equip people to live the God-honoring lives He intended us all to live.

This collection of sermons from the Gospels serves several purposes. First, it gives voice to some of America's finest expository preachers. Readers may not be familiar with all the names, but they represent a host of preachers who are carrying on the art of biblical preaching in countless churches in the United States.

Second, to readers who may not be familiar with preaching that accurately explains and applies the Bible, this book serves as an introduction. Too many hear messages about the Bible rather than hearing for themselves what the Bible teaches. Hopefully, this book

will challenge such readers to seek out churches, preachers, and ministries that focus on the Bible, which “is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Third, these sermons serve as examples to young pastors or pastors-in-training of the kind of preaching that needs to be practiced faithfully in our churches, today and in the future. Readers will find variety in style and approach in these sermons, and that is as it should be. But they will also find consistency in bringing forth the accurate meaning of Scripture in a way that touches people where they live. Truth is always practical, and those whose sermons are included here are committed to disseminating the truth of the Bible without compromise. As such, their sermons provide fine examples for young preachers to follow.

Fourth, the sermons in this book are all from the New Testament Gospels, which focus on the life and teaching and works of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is God in the flesh, the Creator, Redeemer, Savior, and Lord. He is central to all of history and the center of all the Bible. To study any portion of the life of Christ is a worthy pursuit that can only benefit us. If these sermons serve no other purpose than giving readers a greater understanding of, appreciation for, and commitment to Jesus Christ, they will have accomplished as much or more than the contributors ever could have hoped for.

The sermons in this volume come from all areas of Christ’s life. They are not comprehensive by any means but are representative glimpses of Christ’s life. All the contributors are graduates of Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana.¹ They represent various churches, schools, and ministries and several generations, yet the training they hold in common brings a theological consistency to the sermons. Also, interspersed among the sermons are several

¹ Grace Theological Seminary itself had no part in the production and publishing of this book.

Sermons from the Gospels

charts and topical essays that contribute to the big picture of the Gospels.

On behalf of all who contributed to this book, I trust that the preaching of Christ herein will in some part accomplish the great work of “admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28).

Jarl K. Waggoner

Contributors

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LEE COMPSON is a native of Warsaw, Indiana. He received a degree in youth ministry from Grace College before moving on to Grace Theological Seminary, where he completed his Master of Divinity. Soon after, he married Stephanie (Moore), whom he had met in college, and they settled down in Winona Lake, where they both worked. In addition to his “normal” job, Lee continued to serve in his home church, leading the college and young adult ministry, which he had overseen since college. In January 2013, he became senior pastor at Milford First Brethren Church in Milford, Indiana. Lee is an avid sports fan and enjoys playing basketball and slow-pitch softball in his spare time.

IVAN FRENCH served three churches before returning to his alma mater, Grace Theological Seminary, where he taught for over twenty years. Known for his warm heart and humorous stories (what he called “illustrative anecdotes”), he taught Bible, theology, and church history with both an academic knowledge and practical application. His teaching infused a heart and energy for Christ and the church in the seminary program. During this time he continued to be active in pastoral ministry, campus leadership, global missions, and Bible conferences, encouraging and strengthening the men and women he had helped to train. Ivan and his wife Arloeen are now retired and live in Winona Lake, Indiana.

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MICHAEL HONTZ resides in Warsaw, Indiana, along with his wife Marta and their two daughters, Elliana and Emily. After graduating with a B.A. in Bible Theology from Appalachian Bible College, Mike served as a youth pastor in Pennsylvania for four years before moving to Indiana to attend Grace Theological Seminary, where he received the M. Div. in Exegetical Studies. Mike ministered at Pleasant View Bible Church in various pastoral roles before becoming the senior pastor in 2011.

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8

Christ Will Build His Church¹

(Matthew 16:18)

RICHARD L. MAYHUE

Sir Christopher Wren, the great architect of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, reportedly arrived at the construction site one day and inquired of three different workmen, "What are you doing?" The first replied, "I'm earning a meager living to support my family." The second said he was merely constructing another building. The third had a grander view. He answered, "I'm part of a magnificent project to build the world's most beautiful cathedral to the glory of God." Unless we have the third worker's perspective, sooner or later we will lose our zeal for Christ's first love—the church. By neglect, the church will then fall into disrepair.

Even worse, another contemporary pitfall looms larger; it is possible to have a zeal for the church that is tragically misguided by the ways of the world rather than directed by Scripture. This danger finds modernity more appealing than God's Word when seeking solutions for contemporary problems that face the church. The church that is built this way will be condemned by Christ, not commended.

Unfortunately, when it comes to the twenty-first-century evangelical church as a whole, techniques have replaced truth, style has supplanted substance, convenience outdistances consecration, and modern church growth principles receive more attention than biblical church growth truth. Scripturally speaking, this is not Christ's intended state of affairs for his lovely bride—the church.

¹ This chapter is adapted from the introduction of Richard L. Mayhue, *What Would Jesus Say about Your Church?* (Fearn, Tain, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2001) and used by permission.

This man-centered approach to the church spells out a gloomy future for what ought to be as bright as Christ's glory.

But what can be done to remedy this sad state of affairs? I join Isaiah in shouting, "To the law and to the testimony!" (Isa. 8:20). Evangelicals desperately need to repent of their worldly approach to the church and return to the Scriptures. The church requires a fresh glimpse of her majestic Lord—Jesus Christ; and she needs to become reacquainted with His revealed plan and purpose for the church as outlined in the Bible. She needs to be reminded that Christ will build His church His way.

Can you imagine Christ writing a letter directly to your church as He did to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2–3)? What would Christ say about contemporary churches in light of what we know He wrote about first-century churches? This message is designed to help you know Christ's mind concerning the church in general and your church in particular.

Christ's thinking about the church has not changed from what was originally written in Scripture. Therefore, if the church is to regain her former glory, it must be through radical transformation by taking the church back to the basics as outlined in Scripture. Then we all must roll up our sleeves and engage in the hard work of restoring the church to her original beauty according to the biblical blueprint.

Today's Dilemma

Crossroads. Transition. Crisis. Uncertainty. Restlessness. These unsettling words express the perception of many evangelicals regarding the immediate status of the church. Few would disagree that a call for redirection has come to the drifting evangelical church in the twenty-first century. However, there is no current consensus on which route the church should take to get back on track.

In order to appreciate the confusion, consider John Seel's survey of twenty-five prominent evangelical leaders.² The leaders ex-

² John Seel, *The Evangelical Forfeit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 48-65.

pressed their views on the general state of evangelicalism at the end of the twentieth century. Eight dominant themes emerged from their less-than-optimistic responses.

1. Uncertain identity—A widespread confusion over what defines an evangelical
2. Institutional disenchantment—A perceived ineffectiveness and irrelevance
3. Lack of leadership—A lament over the paucity of spiritual leadership in the church.
4. Pessimistic about the future—A belief that evangelicalism's future hangs in the balance.
5. Growth up, impact down—A confusing paradox without immediate, clear explanations
6. Cultural isolation—A complete arrival of the post-Christian era
7. Pragmatic response to problems—A drift toward unbiblical approaches to ministry
8. Shift from truth-orientation ministry to market-response driven ministry—A redirection away from the eternal toward the temporal in order to be viewed as relevant

For certain, the decisions made in this decade will reshape the evangelical church for much of the century to come. Thus, the future direction of the contemporary church is a preeminent concern. Unquestionably, the twenty-first century faces a defining moment. The real contrast in competing ministry models should not be the "traditional" versus the "contemporary," as commonly claimed, but rather the scriptural compared to the unscriptural.

"Reengineering the Church" was the theme of a prominent late twentieth-century pastoral leadership conference on how to prepare the church for the next century. As I read the conference brochure, my initial response was, "Why reengineer the church when God designed it perfectly in the beginning?" Shouldn't we inspect the church first and replace only the defective portions? Wouldn't it be best to rebuild the demolished part according to the Builder's original plan? Who can improve on God's engineering?" I

concluded the solution is not reengineering but *restoration* to the perfect, original specifications of the divine Designer. The goal of any changes should be a return to the church's biblical roots.

An inspection of the existing church for areas of needed restoration should include such biblically oriented questions as these:

- Have we consulted the *Owner* (1 Cor. 3:9)?
- Do we have the permission of the *Investing Partner* (Acts 20:28)?
- Are we dealing with the *original Builder* (Matt. 16:18)?
- Does the church still rest on the *beginning Foundation* (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20)?
- Is the *first Cornerstone* still in place (Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4-8)?
- Are we using *approved building materials* (1 Pet. 2:5)?
- Do we employ the right *laborers* (1 Cor. 3:9)?
- Have we utilized the *appropriate supervisors* (Eph. 4:13-16)?
- Are the initial *standards of quality control* still in place (Eph. 4:11-13)?
- Are we continuing to work from the *original blueprint* (2 Tim. 3:16-17)?

Yesterday's Promise

Before wildly plunging ahead to restore the church, we would do well to first look back twenty-one centuries—to the beginning—at the greatest promise ever made on the church's behalf. The Author and Perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2), also known as the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25), boldly asserted, "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it" (Matt. 16:18).

We might be persuaded to conclude that a two-thousand-year-old organization, such as the church, would be settled in her identity and purpose by now. However, this is an unwarranted assumption. Unless each succeeding generation returns to Christ's promise in Matthew 16 and to the New Testament building in-

structions, the church surely will deviate from God's original plan as has been proven conclusively over twenty centuries of church history.

If you seriously reflect on Christ's promise, a number of significant questions should arise.

- To whom do we look when the church is in disrepair—Christ or man?
- Who knows more about the current needs of the church—Christ or man?
- Who can provide better for the church—Christ or man?
- From whom did the original idea of the church come—Christ or man?
- In whom does the church's future hope rest—Christ or man?
- Who built the church up until now—Christ or man?
- Whom do we trust for future directions—Christ or man?
- Who owns and sustains the church—Christ or man?
- For whose glory does the church exist—Christ's or man's?
- Who is the Head of the church—Christ or man?

Because *Christ* is the correct answer to each of these questions, we turn to Matthew 16:18, where Jesus delivers at least seven hallmark principles for building the church. No one should launch out in planning a new church or take on the risk of revitalizing a worn-out church until the defining truths of this Scripture have gripped one's heart and mind.

Tomorrow's Hope (Matt. 16:18)

¹⁸ "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."

Hallmark 1

First, Jesus said His church has a *permanent foundation*. Christ passionately pursued the lasting fruit of eternity. In His promise, He

10

God Will Save Sinners!

(Mark 10:17-22)

RICHARD L. MAYHUE

Perhaps you can remember when you were saved. For me, it was on a Monday night, April 6, 1970, at Scott Memorial Baptist Church in San Diego. 'B' and I struggled in our three-year-old marriage because I loved my career as a naval officer, and she loved our eighteen-month-old daughter.

Fortunately, our Christian neighbors had built a friendship with us to the point that they started inviting us to their local church. Each time we politely refused. Finally, just to appease them, I said yes to a Monday night family seminar. We figured nothing spectacular could happen on a weekday night at a Baptist church.

That evening we heard a simple gospel presentation. I know I had heard the gospel before, but it had never made much sense; plus, in my estimation, I did not live badly enough to be considered a thoroughgoing sinner.

But this night proved different. Everything I heard computed. All the preacher, Kenny Poure, said had the authority of Scripture. My sinfulness became clear in light of God's holiness—I was lost and needed to be rescued. Christ's death on my behalf and God's offer of eternal life were graciously irresistible. By the end of the service, I figured the only logical thing to do was to accept what I so clearly needed and what God had so mercifully provided, and so I did. P.S., so did 'B.'

If you had asked me immediately after the service what had happened, I would have reported that I heard the facts, I considered the alternatives, and I wisely chose eternal life in Christ over eternal damnation in hell. At that time, it seemed as if the whole event revolved around and depended on me.

Over the years, however, Scripture has taught me that God played the major role that night and, at best, I responded in a minor way.

In as clear and basic a way as possible, we want to review the fundamentals of salvation from God's perspective, so that we can understand what happened to us, who did what, and, most important, how salvation has changed us.

The Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-22)

¹⁷ As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹ "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" ²⁰ And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up."

²¹ Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." ²² But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.

Let's first look in on a religiously oriented person who erroneously believed, as I did at one time, that salvation depended primarily on himself rather than on God. We both centered our hopes on human achievement rather than divine accomplishment.

The rich young ruler, highly interested in life beyond death, ran with urgency to publicly inquire of Jesus, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17). Our Lord's answer has baffled people through the centuries because He did not respond with a simple, "Believe on Me and you will have eternal life." Rather, He exposed the young man's counterfeit interest.

The inquirer betrayed his apparent sincerity by four common mistakes people make in regard to the true nature of salvation. First, he would not acknowledge his own spiritual bankruptcy by admitting that he could do nothing to merit eternal life (Mark 10:17). Only God could accomplish his salvation. Second, he did not acknowledge the Lord Jesus as God. He saw Him only as a good teacher who could explain the way of God (v. 18). Third, he failed to recognize and repent of his own personal sinfulness (vv. 19-20). Rather, he extolled the self-righteous virtues of his life from his youth up. Fourth, he refused to accept the exchanged life of following the will of Christ as Savior and Lord, rather than continuing to pursue his own agenda (vv. 21-22).

Don't be confused here—Jesus did not teach a salvation by works. Rather, just the opposite was true. The rich young ruler tried to gain eternal life through human effort; but the Lord, through a series of questions and commands, pointed him to the real heart of the salvation extended by the mercy and grace of God. Receiving the free gift of eternal life involves at least these four elements.

1. Admitting that only God can save us
2. Acknowledging Jesus Christ as God in human flesh—crucified and resurrected
3. Agreeing to our personal sin, which needs God's forgiveness
4. Accepting God's terms of salvation

Jesus' encounter with this young man stands in contrast to other occasions, where salvation occurred because the above truths were involved. Look at these two prime examples.

"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:13-14)

And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."... And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household. (Acts 16:29-31, 34)

The life of Paul unmistakably illustrates this point. Paul and the rich young ruler both thought identically about salvation in their youth. Before Paul met Christ, he approached salvation from a self-righteous perspective. He thought God owed him eternal life because of whom he had become and what he had done (Phil. 3:4-6).

Later, Paul recognized that he could offer nothing worthy of God and that his best fell enormously short of meriting salvation. At that point, according to Paul's personal testimony in Philippians 3, he counted his religious past to be filthy and as repulsive as excrement. Paul then considered his whole life up to that time as a total spiritual loss in order that he might gain the things of Christ (Phil. 3:7-8).

Until then he had held to a form of godliness but denied its power (2 Tim. 3:5). Now Paul turned his back on self-righteousness through human achievement and by faith embraced Christ's righteousness through God's accomplishment. In so doing, he inherited eternal life (Phil. 3:9-11).

For confirmation of this analysis, reflect back on the historical descriptions of Paul's salvation (Acts 9:3-9; 22:6-11; 26:12-20). In the Acts 9 account, Paul acknowledged Christ's lordship and obeyed His instructions. Acts 22:10 informs us that Paul asked, "What shall I do, Lord?"—similar in words to the rich young ruler's question but quite different in meaning. Paul actually submitted to the will of the One he called Lord. "I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision" summarizes Paul's response to God's demands (Acts 26:19).

Paul gave up everything of self and this life in exchange for embracing everything of God and eternal life. Although I could not have explained it at the time, that's exactly what happened to me

that April evening on the corner of Oregon and Madison in San Diego. I abandoned self and fully embraced Christ.

Generation

In order to understand why human beings need to be spiritually rescued by God, let's go back to Genesis 1–2. A holy God spoke a holy world and sinless human race into existence. At the conclusion of His six days of creation, "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day" (Gen. 1:31).

Into this perfect world He placed a male and female, both created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). They were not deity, but as God's image bearers they shared some of the divine ability to know and think. Over this perfect world, God gave Adam and Eve dominion, with the freedom to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. They received only one negative command:

The LORD God commanded the man, saying "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it, you will surely die." (Gen. 2:16-17)

Imagine a flawless world you could enjoy forever, with only one thing you should not do. That was the world of Adam and Eve. The human race had been "generated" by God's creative energy to enjoy God's blessing forever.

Degeneration

But the story does not end there. Shortly thereafter, Satan deceived Eve (2 Cor. 11:3), and both Eve and Adam violated God's prohibition (Gen. 3:1-6). As God promised, they both died, first spiritually and later physically.

For Adam and Eve, death involved separation. Later on their physical bodies would be separated from their spiritual beings when what we commonly think of as death occurred (Gen. 5:5). But a far more important death took place immediately after they ate—

a spiritual death. At that point, their sin of disobedience separated them from unbroken communion with their holy God. The indications of this are given in Genesis 3:7-13.

1. They were self-conscious (v. 7).
2. They hid from God (v. 8).
3. They were afraid of God (v. 10).
4. Adam blamed Eve for his own actions (v. 12).
5. Eve blamed Satan for her own actions (v. 13).

As a result, God cursed Satan, the woman, and Adam. Then they were evicted from the garden, which housed the tree of eternal life (Gen. 3:14-24).

Let's stop for a moment and put the entire Bible in perspective. Scripture can be outlined around this most important historical occurrence, which resulted in God's curses.

I. Pre-Curse History	Genesis 1–2
II. Curse History	Genesis 3–Revelation 20
III. Post-Curse History	Revelation 21–22

Out of the 1,189 chapters in the Bible, only four speak of a time when the curse of Genesis 3 does not prevail. When the new heaven and the new earth arrive (Rev. 21:1), there will no longer be any curse (Rev. 22:3). The remaining 1,185 chapters contrast man's utter sinfulness and inability to save himself with God's unblemished holiness and His provision in Jesus Christ for human redemption from sin and regeneration to eternal life.

As a result of Adam's sin, the entire human race has been born into sin. Although originally generated in holiness, because of Adam and Eve's fall, the whole human race is now degenerate and eternally separated from God.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. (Ps. 51:5)

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23)

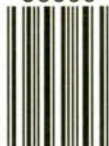
The Gospels present an accurate and compelling portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ. The events of His life, His teaching, and His wondrous works all proclaim Him to be the Christ—Israel's Messiah—and the eternal God who became Man. This collection of sermons and essays from the Gospels gives us glimpses of the Christ, touching on His unique person, His profound teaching, His miracles, and the salvation He secured through His death and resurrection. Some of America's finest expository preachers explain the Gospel texts with depth and understanding and always with a view toward personal application of the truths they reveal.

The contributors to this enlightening and practical volume are John Whitcomb, Ivan French, Richard Mayhue, Bob Lanning, Ernie Godshall, Ike Graham, John French, James Coffey, Jarl Waggoner, Tom Triggs, Michael Hontz, and Lee Compson. These men—all graduates of Grace Theological Seminary—represent various churches and ministries and three generations of biblical preachers.

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