

We Would See Jesus



Part 3: The Incarnate Lord

T. M. Moore

The Fellowship of Ailbe

A ReVision Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

We Would See Jesus Part 3: The Incarnate Lord

We Would See Jesus
Part 3: The Incarnate Lord
A *ReVision* Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe
Copyright 2020 T. M. and Susie Moore
The Fellowship of Ailbe www.ailbe.org
Waxed Tablet Publications

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Contents

Welcome to <i>The Incarnate Lord</i>	4
1 The Welcoming Jesus	5
2 The Strong Jesus	8
3 The Compassionate Jesus	10
4 The Patient Jesus	12
5 The Poetic Jesus	15
6 The Resolute Jesus	18
7 The Suffering Jesus	20
Questions for Reflection or Discussion	22

Welcome to *The Incarnate Lord*

The place to begin in any serious and prolonged consideration of Jesus is, of course, with how He is revealed to us in the gospels.

Everyone has some image of Jesus as He walked about in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. We see Him healing and teaching and casting out demons. But we need to look more closely at Jesus, so that we see His face in such situations. For it is the face of Jesus we long to see, where the glory of God radiates transforming power to make us more like Him (2 Cor. 3.12-18; 4.6).

In this part of our study, “We Would See Jesus,” we consider Jesus as the writers of the four gospels present Him to us. Our goal is to sharpen our focus on the face of Jesus, that we might see Him more clearly and consistently, and increase in love for Him. We’ll be helped along the way by Puritan theologian John Owen, whose *Christologia* constitutes one of the most thorough overall studies of the Person and work of Christ.

We’re pleased to provide these *ReVision* studies at no cost, to help you in realizing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God.

If you find these studies helpful, please consider making a contribution to The Fellowship of Ailbe to help us in our ministry. You can do that by clicking the contribute button at our website, www.ailbe.org, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 The Welcoming Jesus

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11.28-30

Sharpening our focus

You can’t read the gospels without forming some image in your mind of Jesus and whatever it is He’s doing. John Owen (1616-1683) wrote (*Christologia*): “Every [believer] hath the idea or image of Christ in his mind, in the eye of faith, as it is represented unto him in the glass of the Gospel... We behold his glory ‘in a glass,’ which implants the image of it on our minds. And hereby the mind is transformed into the same image, made like unto Christ so represented unto us—which is the conformity we speak of. Hence every true believer hath his heart under the conduct of an habitual inclination and desire to be like unto Christ.”

Where do those images come from? Sometimes from an illustrated children’s Bible. Sometimes a poster in a Sunday school room. Perhaps your image of Jesus derives from some painting, such as the wonderful [illustrations James Tissot made](#) of the earthly life of Jesus in the late 19th century. Maybe you watched a film such as “The Greatest Story Ever Told” or “The Jesus Film”, and that shaped your image of Jesus, as you pictured Him during the course of His earthly ministry.

However we have come to our vision of Jesus, that we *have* an image of the Lord as He ministered during the time of His incarnation is beyond doubt. All these means I’ve mentioned can be helpful in shaping our vision of Jesus as He walked among us. But because these are all someone *else’s* vision of the Lord, we should not be content merely to adopt these as our own. We want to see Jesus like those ancient Greeks wanted to see Him, up close and personal.

In this part of our study, “We Would See Jesus”, we’ll be considering Jesus – aesthetically and theologically – as He is reported to us by the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We’ll draw on the vision of others for each situation we consider, and we’ll try to enlarge and make more vivid our own vision of Jesus during those years that He became flesh and dwelled among us. This will put us in good stead, later in our study, to consider Jesus as He is presented to us exalted in glory and returning in power.

We begin with the comforting notion that Jesus is a welcoming Lord.

Jesus Who welcomes

This shows up very early on in Jesus’ earthly sojourn. John reports that two of John the Baptist’s disciples – Andrew and probably John – began to follow Jesus, after John pointed Him out as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world (Jn. 1.35-39). John tells us that, as they began to go after Him, “Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, ‘What do you seek?’” After they asked about His lodgings, Jesus said to them, “Come and see.”

What did Andrew and John see in Jesus’ face and eyes as He turned? And as He invited them into His lodging? Surely they saw a gentleness, a welcoming smile, and a softness in His visage. He welcomed them with a look and with a simple invitation to come and be a part of His life, if only for the rest of the day.

In Matthew 19.14, Jesus rebuked His disciples for trying to keep little children from coming to Him: “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.” I don’t have to work too hard to see what Jesus’ face looked like as those children rushed to His side. I know what my own face looks like every time Susie and I see our grandchildren, and I reach out to grab and hug them – happiness, love, fun, and sweet reunion as I

gaze into each of their eyes. Perhaps the [Benjamin Robert Haydon \(1786-1846\) depiction](#) is what you see.

Jesus surely had a somewhat different welcoming look on His face when He invited Peter to step out of the boat and walk on the water to Him (Matt. 14.25-30). We recall that the “wind *was* boisterous” (don’t you love that?) as Peter stepped out onto the waves. He was looking to Jesus, looking Him in the face. Surely He must have seen strength, determination, calm, and a welcoming and challenging look – a nod, a raise of the eyebrows, or a slight smile? Peter fixed on that welcoming face. And as long as He did, He walked on the water.

It was when Peter looked away from the face of Jesus, and considered the boisterous waves instead of the welcoming Master, that he began to sink. What do you see in the face of our welcoming Lord? Do you see Him, as [James Tissot](#) suggested, moving toward you, arms extending to take you in, face calm, and His whole body radiant with glory?

The face of Jesus is a welcoming face. He sees us at all times, from out of the radiance of His glory, and with eyes of flame, welcoming us as to a laughing fire in the midst of winter. As you come to Jesus, to see and consider Him, see Him reaching out to welcome you, beckoning you to come and see Him in His glory, where He dwells at the Father’s right hand.

Welcome to what?

But to what does Jesus welcome us? As we see Him reaching out to us, or waving us on toward Him, happy to see us seeing Him seeing us, and pleased to have us in His Presence, to what is He welcoming us?

First, to Himself: “Come to Me...” There is nothing to compare with this, to come into the Presence of Jesus, to know Him intimately, participate in His Presence, joy, strength, radiance, power, and glory. This is where we are bound in our journey in the Lord (1 Jn. 3.1-3); and it pleases Him to welcome us in ever-increasing measure into His Presence in prayer, meditation, and in the Lord’s Supper. The more clearly we see Jesus, the more eager we will be to enter His welcoming Presence every day.

But Jesus also welcomes us into His work: “Take My yoke upon you...” Jesus is ploughing the field of the world, that He might sow the good seed of the Kingdom all throughout it (Matt. 13.24-30, 36-43). Hard ground must be broken up with the patient work of the plow. Weeds and rocks – all hindrances to growth – must be removed. The ground must be sown, watered, cultivated, and cared for – the ground of our souls and of our Personal Mission Fields.

Jesus welcomes us to Himself so that we may join Him in His work. We who would see Jesus must see Him in His work, and want to join Him in it.

But Jesus also welcomes us to His Word and His instruction: “...learn from Me...” As you consider Jesus, looking to Him and entering His Presence, you must come ready to learn – to learn Jesus, as Paul put it (Eph. 4.17-24). You’ll want to be “hearing His voice in every line” of Scripture, “holding communion with my Lord.” You should pray, “Spirit of God, My Teacher be, showing the things of Christ to me” (Eliza E. Hewitt). And thus you should expect to listen well, understand clearly, incorporate God’s Word into your soul, and prepare to live what you’ve learned about Jesus, more and more.

And finally, Jesus welcomes us to His rest: “...you will find rest for your souls.” That rest is sweet peace, fresh buds of righteousness, and springtime fragrances of joy, all welling up within us in the welcoming Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As you consider Jesus in the gospels, study His welcoming ways, and put yourself before Him as He smiles and holds out a hand, saying to you, “Come and see.”

We Would See Jesus Part 3: The Incarnate Lord

For reflection

1. What do you think of when someone is described to you as a “welcoming” person?
2. “Welcoming” is related to “hospitality”. How would you define each of these terms?
3. When you think of Jesus, welcoming people in one way or another during His earthly ministry, what do you see? Is this how we should think of Him now?

Next steps – Preparation: Spend some time meditating on Jesus – considering His beauty – as He welcomes you into His Presence. Thank the Lord that He welcomes us to Himself, His work, His instruction, and His rest.

2 The Strong Jesus

Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.
Mark 4.39

The God of all strength

We are stressing the importance of improving our vision of Jesus, as He is revealed to us in the Scriptures. We all have some image of Jesus in our minds. None of these is complete; all can be improved. We look to the Scriptures as our guide as we consider Jesus, but we also want to learn from those who – whether as theologians, artists, poets, composers, pastors, or friends – have made evident progress in this effort. We must ever strive, as Paul and Peter urged, to increase in the knowledge of the Lord. This will necessarily require us to receive the vision of Jesus which God is pleased to reveal in His Word.

The Puritan John Owen warned us against becoming complacent in this matter: "...it argues the woeful enmity of the carnal mind against God and all the effects of His wisdom, that, whereas He hath granted us such a glorious image and representation of Himself, we like it not, we delight not in the contemplation of it, but either despise it or neglect it, and please ourselves in that which is incomparably beneath it." He added, "I shall only say, that those who are in conversant with these objects of faith—whose minds are not delighted in the admiration of, and acquiescence in, things incomprehensible, such as is this constitution of the person of Christ—who would reduce all things to the measure of their own understandings, or else willfully live in the neglect of what they cannot comprehend—do not much prepare themselves for that vision of these things in glory, wherein our blessedness doth consist" (*Christologia*).

Enmity against God? Carnal minds? Satisfied with less? Let this never be true of us. Rather, let us press on, encourage one another, talk and pray and sing and rejoice, that the eyes of our hearts may open wide to receive the light of Jesus, as we come to the Father praying, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

The strength of the Lord

We are considering Jesus as we see Him during the years of His incarnation. We've seen that Jesus to be a welcoming God. He looks upon us continually, with His flaming eyes and radiant face, showing us mercy and grace to help in all our times of need. He calls us to come to Him, to come and see where He dwells in glory, to join Him in His work, to be taught by Him, and to enter His rest. He looks upon us with favor, beckoning us into His Presence, that He might flood our souls with the light of His glory, and transform us into His own likeness more and more.

That same look with which Jesus our Good Shepherd gazes upon us to test, transform, and treat us with His love, also imparts to us strength for everyday living. Jesus is the strength of God (Ps. 20.6). He is the strength for all our life, so that we need not live in fear (Ps. 27.1; 28.7). As we gaze into the face of the Lord Jesus, we may expect to know His strength for all our times of need (Ps. 105.4). He gives us His strength so that we may tread above all adversity and walk the high hills of righteousness for His Name and His glory (Hab. 3.19).

Jesus is our strong God and Savior and King. We can see that strength on display in many situations during His earthly sojourn. As Jesus welcomes us into His Presence, He is ready to grant us His strength for whatever He calls and sends us to do.

Let's have a closer look.

Spiritual strength for spiritual living

The strength which Jesus displayed during His earthly sojourn is unlike anything we see anywhere else. Jesus

had the strength to tell the wind to quiet down. By His great strength He raised a dead girl and two dead men; healed many of seemingly incurable ills; cast demons out of miserable people; drove greedy merchants from the temple; stood up to the greatest powers of His day without flinching or backing down; and bore the sins of the world in His suffering on the cross. By His great strength He overcame death and the grave and took back the life He had freely laid down so that we might know Him in His glory.

Jesus' strength was above all *spiritual* strength, strength that comes from being totally committed to the will of God, completely immersed in His Word and plan, and filled with His Spirit without measure.

In the face of the greatest temptations anyone could ever face, Jesus showed the kind of spiritual strength that is available to us every day. As the devil appealed to His physical needs, His reputation, and His promised reward as King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus calmly rejected every temptation by appealing to the Word of God (Matt. 4.1-11). By so doing, exercising the strength of God in submission to His Word, Jesus bound the devil, kicked down the walls of his citadel, and began plundering all his holdings (Matt. 12.22-29).

With the eyes of your heart, how do you see Jesus in each of these situations? How does His face show the glory of the God of all strength (Ps. 29.1)? What is the tenor of His voice – that voice like the clear and unwavering sound of a trumpet (Rev. 1.10)? How do His eyes appear? Weeping with distraught parents or siblings? Glaring with anger at temple polluters? Calm but firm as He commands the winds to be still, the demons to depart, and the wretched to be healed? Look to His face! See the strength of the Lord there in those flame-like eyes, and observe the glory of that strength as Jesus wields it to reconcile the fallen world to God.

Then realize that the strength of Jesus is His Word – the grace-gleaming Sword of the Spirit that is able to expose all corruption and sin and fit us for *every* good work (Heb. 4.12; 2 Tim. 3.15-17). The Word of Jesus is His strength; and that same Word is given to us, that we might be strengthened with might in the inner person and filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 1.19; 3.20), as we go forth to fill our world with the Presence and glory of Jesus (Eph. 4.8-10).

Consider Jesus, flexing spiritual muscles of grace and truth as He speaks the Word of God during the course of His earthly ministry. As we *receive* that Word and *live in obedience* to it, the same strength that Jesus exercised becomes available to us, bringing grace and mercy sufficient for all our times of need (Heb. 4.16).

The more clearly and consistently we *see Jesus* wielding the spiritual strength of the Word of God, the more we will be emboldened to join Him in His yoke and seek His Kingdom in every area of life.

For reflection

1. In your heart's eye, how does Jesus appear to you as our strong God?
2. What is your favorite manifestation of strength by Jesus in the gospels? Why?
3. What does it mean for you to exercise the spiritual strength of Jesus? How can you prepare for this daily?

Next steps – Transformation: In prayer, think about something in the day ahead, where you will need the strength of Jesus. Seek the Lord's strength now for when you will need it then.

3 The Compassionate Jesus

But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” Matthew 9.36-38

And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. Mark 6.34

And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. Matthew 14.14

Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.” Matthew 15.32

Seeing Jesus

In this part of our study, we’re trying to enrich our understanding and vision of Jesus by considering Him as He walked among us, doing good and teaching about the Kingdom of God. We all can see Him in our mind’s eye in the various situations of His ministry. But we want to see Him more clearly, more closely, and in a way that allows what we see in Him to have a formative influence in our own lives. We’re asking God to open the eyes of our heart and let the light of Jesus shine throughout our souls in richer, fuller ways.

Now some may be put off by this exercise, thinking it to be a bit too fanciful or mystical for their liking. No one was more circumspect about the use of the imagination in this capacity than the Puritan John Owen. Yet he wrote, “It is no work of fancy or imagination—it is not the feigning images in our minds of such things as are meet to satisfy our carnal affections, to excite and act them; but it is a due adherence unto that object which is represented unto faith in the proposal of the gospel. Therein, as in a glass, do we behold the glory of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, and have our souls filled with transforming affections unto him.”

This entire study is devoted to seeing Jesus like this, giving a “due adherence” to how Jesus is presented to us in the Scriptures – and especially in this part of our study, in the gospels – so that we may “behold the glory of Christ” and “have our souls filled with transforming affections” toward Him. Owen continued, “This is our duty, this will be our wisdom, upon affecting discoveries of the glory of Christ; namely, to apply ourselves unto him by invocation or praise; and thereby will the refreshment and advantage of them abide upon our minds.”

To see Jesus, to know Christ, to love and serve and worship Him: This is our project, by which we earnestly hope to know “the refreshment and advantage” that comes with seeing Him for the enrichment of our soul.

Jesus sees us striving to see Him, and He sees us with eyes of compassion and love.

Compassion

In each of the texts introducing this installment a variation of the verb “to have compassion” is used. In the Greek, that verb is *σπλαγγνίζομαι* *splangnizomia*. According to Louw and Nida, this word means “to experience great affection and compassion for someone – to feel compassion for, to have great affection for, love, compassion.” The root of the verb is the word “bowels” or “guts.” Compassion is something you feel in the depths of your being. It rumbles in your gut, stirs deep within you, and creates a mild wrenching or troubling, and makes you want to do something.

What does a person look like who is “filled with compassion”? The face softens. The eyes moisten. The brows furrow slightly as if to share in the need that is being observed. A somber mood of sympathy, sorrow, and urgency settles one who is filled with compassion, and he just feels like he needs to do something.

We have compassion for all kinds of people in all kinds of situations. It's why we grieve and give when disaster strikes; or take steps to assuage sorrow and pain in the midst of disease; or why we take a meal to others; or write a letter of condolence. Compassion moves us to give, to pray, to come alongside a sufferer and put a comforting arm around a shoulder.

The compassion of Jesus

We can see all this in Jesus in these four vignettes. Look at Him feeling compassion. Listen as He tells His disciples that He “has compassion” on those lost, searching, hungry people. See in His face the unmistakable signs of Someone Who truly feels your pain, Who knows what you're up against and really cares, and Who bends toward you to greet you with the strength and delights of His grace sufficient for all your times of need.

And see Him, enthroned as the Word of God, as He condescends to take on flesh and come among us as a compassionate Servant, to bring the love of God for our salvation by His own suffering, death, and resurrection (Phil. 2.5-11).

Jesus is looking upon us at all times, and at all times the King Who welcomes us into His great strength looks upon us with compassionate eyes. “Come unto Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden,” He says, as He prepares just the measure of mercy and grace you need for whatever you're facing just now.

When you look to see Jesus, don't see Him looking past you. He didn't look past those mulling crowds. Look at those fiery, flickering eyes as they look at you with tenderness, warmth, and shepherding care and love. Then flee into His welcoming arms with squeals of praise and rejoicing and thanksgiving. Feed on His Word and shelter in His rest; and let His Spirit work within you that same compassionate care for the people to whom the Lord sends you each day.

The glory of God which we may see in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ is the extraordinary look of compassion, a look that is followed by the Lord Who stoops to save by serving us in all our needs with the riches of glory He holds within Himself. See Jesus, the all-compassionate One, and rejoice in His never-failing compassion for you.

For reflection

1. What is compassion? What does it feel like? To what does it lead?
2. Why did the Greeks believe that compassion begins deep within us, in our bowels or guts? How can we become more truly compassionate?
3. How does seeing Jesus as compassionate help us to become more like Him?

Next steps – Preparation: Think about the day ahead. What opportunities for showing compassion might you expect? Prepare for them now by seeing Jesus as He looks compassionately upon you.

4 The Patient Jesus

But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." "Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?" And they said, "Seven." So He said to them, "How is it you do not understand?" Mark 8.17-21

Motive to serve

It may seem that we are making too much of this practice of fixing in our minds, hearts, and consciences an increasingly clear and compelling vision of Jesus, that we're calling for an enrichment of our imaginations beyond what Scripture allows and, thus, what may be proper.

But what else can David have meant when he wrote, "I have set the LORD always before me; because *He is at my right hand I shall not be moved*" (Ps. 16.8)? Or what did Paul intend when he wrote, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3.1, 2). That opening "if" could just as well be translated "since". In other words, since you are a Christian, and since your life has been hidden with Christ in God (Col. 1.3), it only makes sense for you to long for the vision of Christ to be always before your mind, increasingly clear, compelling, and transformative.

John Owen was strong in his conviction of the importance of this discipline: "He is no Christian who lives not much in the meditation of the mediation of Christ, and the especial acts of it. Some may more abound in that work than others, as it is fixed, formed and regular; some may be more able than others to dispose their thought concerning them into method and order; some may be more diligent than others in the observation of times for the solemn performance of this duty; some may be able to rise to higher and clearer apprehensions of them than others. But as for those, the bent of whose minds doth not lie towards thoughts of them—whose hearts are not on all occasions retreating unto the remembrance of them—who embrace not all opportunities to call them over as they are able—on what grounds can they be esteemed Christians?"

In this part of our study we're considering Jesus through "the especial acts" which He accomplished during His incarnation. We're looking at familiar situations, scenes, and stories a little more closely, to consider what we might see of Jesus, and how seeing Him more clearly might induce us to love and serve Him with greater joy and fruition. We want to "rise to higher and clearer apprehensions" of Jesus, to fix our minds on Him, so that He might be always before us, just as we are always before Him.

Patient, too

We've considered Jesus as welcoming, strong, and compassionate. Even as we say these words situations in the gospels come to mind, and we see Jesus receiving the little children with open arms, turning over the tables of money-changers, and looking from the cross at His mother and John with welcoming, strong, compassionate eyes. We want to see Him seeing us these ways as well, because as we do, we will be drawn to Him, to hide more completely in His Presence, and thus to participate in Him and the transforming power of His Word, His Spirit, and His glory. We do this, not with our physical eyes, but with the eyes of the heart, praying God to open them wide so that the bright and polychromatic light of Jesus might shine throughout our soul.

Thus, however we see Him, we may learn to see Him more, so that the vision of Christ that is "fixed, formed and regular" in our minds contains more of the total of what God has revealed to us in His Word. We see Him as welcoming, strong, and compassionate as we consider Him during His earthly sojourn.

Can we also see Him as patient? What does a patient person look like? Perhaps it would be easier for us to envision an impatient person. Arms folded across the chest. Looking upon with us tight lips and disapproving eyes. Tapping a foot. Casting a glance at his watch. Making us feel unworthy and uncomfortable as we struggle to get our act together.

Imagine Jesus, then, with those unschooled disciples, trying to help them understand the most profound and empowering truths ever spoken in the world. He taught them in parables. He explained the parables. He showed them by His works. He helped them do such works. He taught them in private. Over and over, day-in and day-out. And they still didn't get it.

But there is a tenderness in His "How is it you do not understand?" He's not about to give up on them. His desire is for them to share in His work, participate in His joy, and draw on His power for a life greater and more fulfilling and fruitful than they had ever dared to ask or think. He is not impatient with His disciples, but patient to bear with them, perhaps with a little laugh, as He thought ahead to just what those men would end up doing after He ascended to the Father.

The fruit of the Spirit includes patience. The Spirit is patient with us, and Jesus is patient, picking us up each time we stumble; gently reminding us of our duty each time we read over a familiar passage of His Word; letting us stub our spiritual toes but standing by to soothe and restore; and prodding, encouraging, pointing the way for us to grow from glory to glory into His image so that we do everything to the glory of God.

If we see Jesus as patient, we will not give up hope. We will not despair. We will not say, "What's the use?" We will draw near to our ever-patient Savior, into His welcoming Presence, where we are wrapped in His compassion and draw on His strength to carry out the calling He has appointed to us.

How do you see Jesus?

As John Owen reminded us, every believer bears some vision of Jesus in mind. For most of, that vision is probably more *limiting* than *liberating*. It is a *small vision* of Jesus rather than an *expansive and enriching* vision. We've caught a glimpse of Jesus at some point, and that glimpse determines in large measure the nature of our discipleship. We see a small Jesus, so we live a small faith.

But when we learn to *consider* Jesus – to meditate on Him like studying a fine work of art or listening to a complex and glorious musical composition, considering Him like a richly rewarding idea with many threads and implications, to *consider* Jesus in these ways, reflecting, praying, singing, talking with others, sinking into Scripture, and learning from our Christian friends and forebears – then the Jesus we see will be the Jesus God reveals to us in His Word, and Whom we are striving to see through these studies. We need to improve at being "diligent" in "the observation of times for the solemn performance of this duty", so that we may see Jesus more clearly, constantly, and transformingly.

How do you see Jesus? Do you think your view of Him is as rich as it could be? Or as it should be? May we increasingly make it our practice to plead with the Father, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

For reflection

1. How do you feel when you know that someone is being patient with you? How does that help you think about Jesus as patient?
2. What can you do to improve in "the observations of times" for considering Jesus?
3. What do you hope to gain from more careful and consistent consideration of Jesus?

We Would See Jesus Part 3: The Incarnate Lord

Next steps – Transformation: Today, practice patience with everyone you meet. Then thank Jesus, each time, for how patient He is with you.

5 The Poetic Jesus

“Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me.” Matthew 26.10

Made for beauty

Human beings are made for beauty. God put beautiful trees in the garden of Eden, because He understands that we need beauty to thrive (Gen. 2.9). The beauty of created things and beautiful culture can help us to consider our Lord Jesus Christ and the beauty of His glory. Jesus Himself appreciated beauty, as we see in the verse that begins this installment. The word translated by NKJV as “good” (*καλόν, kalon*) can mean, at the same time, “beautiful.” What all the other people in that room saw as a frivolous, wasteful gesture, Jesus saw as “a beautiful work” which had been done to glorify Him.

Jesus had an eye for beauty. He saw things in ways others did not. He contemplated ordinary, everyday objects with an eye to discerning in them something of the beauty of God and His glory. I suspect that Jesus appreciated beauty so keenly because He saw in everything around Him some witness to or reflection of Himself and His mission.

Artists, composers, and especially poets have a knack for seeing the beauty in everyday objects and situations. In that respect, Jesus is the supreme Poet, for He saw a witness to Himself and His Kingdom in all kinds of created things, not just in fragrant oils. And He used poetic forms – parables, stories, metaphors, and surprise – to share His observations with others and make them stick in their souls.

The mind of the Poet

Let’s consider Jesus in just two familiar situations, where He saw things others did not, and when He used poetic means to communicate His insights. Let’s look first at the story of Jesus and the Roman coin (Matt. 22.15-21).

Jesus’ adversaries were trying to hoist Him on His own petard. They believed that, if they could get Him to say something subversive about Rome and its government, then the Romans would take it from there, and they would be rid of this pesky prophet.

So they asked the question about the lawfulness of Jews paying taxes to Caesar. You can almost see the twinkle in Jesus’ eye as He says, “Show Me the tax money.” Jesus held the coin up for all to see. Of course, they all knew what was on the coin, the image of Caesar. Jesus invited those who were present to make their own association. The poet Emily Dickinson once wrote, “Tell all the truth, but tell it slant – success in circuit lies...” Jesus knew this poetic practice well as He asked the people about the image stamped on the coin. We can almost hear the people in unison saying, “Caesar’s.”

Then, with the mind of a poet, Jesus drew His hearers into the metaphor He was constructing for them: “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s...” Well, there you have it. Jesus thinks we should pay taxes to Caesar. After all, we do use his coins, no?

Then the poetic floor drops out from under them, “...and to God the things that are God’s.” Whoa! Suddenly the whole idea of “image” took on a new meaning. That coin was made in Caesar’s image, but we are made in *God’s* image! Surely we owe more to God than just a few taxes here and there. “When they had heard *these words*, they marveled...” Yeah, I bet they did.

See the face of Jesus as He does this. I imagine that it isn’t stern and threatening. His face is radiant, His eyes are bright and wide open, and He has a little smile slowly growing across His face and increasing as He sees the faces of others “getting it.”

Fast forward to Luke 24. Jesus engages two disciples on the Emmaus Road. His identity is concealed from them as He engages them about recent events. After listening to their lamentable tale, Jesus says to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” Then, having gotten their attention, “beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (vv. 25-27).

As if they were listening to a master poet weave a remarkable tale in a few brief words, the two disciples felt their hearts growing warm and receptive. But they didn’t know why. Not until that is, Jesus broke the bread for them at the table, and they saw the nail prints in His hands (vv. 28-32). Like a great sonneteer, who poses a situation or sets up a story in twelve carefully-crafted lines of verse, then pops open the resolution in a final couplet, Jesus teaching on that dusty road set these disciples up for the happiest surprise of their lives. Caravaggio’s “[Supper at Emmaus](#)” captures the moment when the Master Poet springs the surprise on the enthralled disciples. So thrilled were they, that they went all the way back to Jerusalem to share their poetic experience with the other disciples.

And what was Jesus like as He spoke with them, as He made point after point about Himself from all throughout the Word of God, and as He opened their eyes in that last bread-breaking couplet? Eager, earnest, tender, clear, patient, and thorough, setting all the tumblers of their souls in place for the insertion and turn of the Key: Jesus Himself.

Can you see the beauty of Jesus as He saw the potential beauty in these two situations? And as He taught and explained and created heightened awareness and finally finished His “poems”? The experience of beauty creates wonder, marveling, insight, and a sense of “Aha!” Jesus saw it well before everyone else, and He helps us to see the beauty in everything, as everything points to the beauty that is in Him.

The drawing power of beauty

We know that Jesus is the Master Poet, because He has made us His “poems”, as Paul put it in Ephesians 2.10 (the Greek word for “workmanship” is *ποίημα, poiema*). When we read a great poem, or see or hear something beautiful, we are drawn to it. We want to participate in that beauty, to become one with it, to be beautiful like it. Jesus used His words to present His truth in beautiful and wondrous ways, like a poet: seeds like the Kingdom; a widow’s mite greater than the greatest treasures, lilies, birds, barns, farmers, and more – all common images fraught with divine beauty, which by drawing that beauty out, like a skilled poet, Jesus reveals His own beauty, to draw us closer to Him.

As John Owen put it, “When the soul hath a view by faith (which nothing else can give it) of the goodness of God as manifested in Christ—that is, of the essential excellencies of his nature as exerting themselves—[the soul] reacheth after him with its most earnest embraces, and is restless until it comes unto perfect fruition.”

See the beauty of Jesus in His poetry of beauty, and let it warm your heart to the point of marveling, as you consider Him in all His radiance and glory.

For reflection

1. How was Jesus’ approach to teaching like that of a great poet?
2. What does great poetry suggest about beauty? Can you think of a favorite hymn that highlights the beauty of Jesus?
3. How does the poetry of the psalms lead us to see Jesus as the Master Poet? How do they help us in considering Him?

We Would See Jesus Part 3: The Incarnate Lord

Next steps – Preparation: Sing the hymn, “Fairest Lord Jesus”, throughout this day, and see the beauty of Jesus in it.

6 The Resolute Jesus

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12.1, 2

The glory in His face

As believers, we are called to “run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus” for strength and guidance and joy in all we do. This is the life of abundant righteousness and peace; this is the life that brings glory to God.

But this life requires resolution and endurance, like that which Jesus Himself showed during His earthly sojourn.

Concerning the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus, John Owen wrote, “the beauty of it is presented unto us only in his face or person. We see it not, we know it not, but as God shines into our hearts to give us the knowledge of it therein: 2 Cor. iv. 6.” He continued, “The enjoyment of heaven is usually called the beatifical vision; that is, such an intellectual[ly] present view, apprehension, and sight of God and his glory, especially as manifested in Christ, as will make us blessed unto eternity.”

We do not see the glory in Jesus’ face with our physical eyes; we see Him with the eyes of the heart, as the Lord opens the aperture into our soul and impresses the light of His glory on our heart, mind, and conscience, in powerful and compelling glimpses of Himself. As the Spirit exposes us to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we are transformed, little by little, into that same likeness, so that Jesus increases in us (2 Cor. 3.12-18; Jn. 3.30). Thus, as Owen continued, “Wherefore, in the contemplation of this mystery doth a great part of our blessedness consist; and farther our thoughts cannot attain.”

The “contemplation of this mystery” – considering Jesus with our entire soul – includes thinking about Him and meditating on Him as He was during the course of His earthly ministry, what it would have been like to see Him welcoming children and disciples, exerting divine strength against spiritual powers, healing people with compassion, teaching poetically, and showing patience and grace with His disciples. Each of these conditions suggests a look on Jesus’ face corresponding to the situation in which we see Him. And, as John Owen reminded us in *Christologia*, we all have some image of Jesus in our minds; the goal of considering Jesus is to improve that image, so that we increase in love for Jesus, and grow to become more like Him.

Like those ancient Greeks, we would see Jesus, because we know that seeing Him, fixing our mind on Him and the things that are above, setting Him always before us, is the way to increase in full and abundant life in Jesus.

The end from the beginning

Luke comments at one point in Jesus’ earthly sojourn that He “steadfastly set His face” to go to Jerusalem and finish His own earthly course (Lk. 9.51). People could see His determination, that resolute look on His face, so that they refused to receive Him in one village because they could tell He would not stay with them (Lk. 9.53). His focus was elsewhere.

Jesus’ face may have been set on Jerusalem, but only because Jerusalem was the staging-ground for the fulfillment of His ministry. From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus had His face fixed on the coming of the Kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 4.17). He knew this was the great promise of Scripture (cf. Gen. 49.8-11; Is. 9.6, 7; etc.), and that His work was the key to inaugurating this great heavenly dispensation on earth. From

the beginning of His ministry, Jesus could see the Kingdom coming on earth as in heaven. He preached and taught about; instructed us to pray for its coming; and commanded us to seek the Kingdom as the first and defining priority of our lives (Matt. 6.10, 33). Not the devil's wiles, the opposition of the powerful, nor the slowness to learn of His disciples could deter Him from resolutely seeking the promised Kingdom of God.

Whatever Jesus was doing during His earthly sojourn, to whatever situation or need or person His face was turned, He always had one eye fixed on the far horizon, where, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, He would bestow His hard-earned Kingdom on His disciples, and they would proceed to turn the world rightside-up for Him (Dan. 7.13-18; Acts 2; Acts 17.1-6).

In *His* mind's eye, Jesus always saw the Kingdom. He saw portents of it in everyday objects and situations; He taught people about its value, ethics, and certainty; and He fixed the eyes of His heart so firmly on the coming of the Kingdom, that He was able to endure the cross and despise the shame of it, because He knew that this was the way of the Kingdom's coming. Thus His was a countenance of hope, confidence, and resolution, regardless of what He had to suffer.

The joy set down before Him

On the cross, as every believer knows, Jesus cried out the words of Psalm 22.1, to express His desolation at the Father's turning away from Him as He bore our sins in His own body. That cry would have cued up other aspects of Psalm 22 for those who were standing by: His hands and feet pierced (v. 16), the mocking crowds (vv. 7, 12, 13), the soldiers gambling for His garments (v. 18). This is what Jesus wanted the *people* to see; but it was the second part of Psalm 22 that *Jesus* was seeing, and that He had set His face so resolutely to achieve: the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Psalm 22.21 ends with the suffering Servant saying, "You have answered Me." In the midst of desolation and horror, Jesus knew God had answered His longing: The Kingdom of God was coming, and even as He hung on the cross, Jesus saw resolutely forward to triumph and glorious expectations.

What did He see? The people of God assembled to praise and glorify Him (vv. 22, 23). He saw God turning His face with favor – as He Himself had done – on those who were afflicted and suffering to relieve their pain and distress (v. 24). He saw the poor being cared for (v. 25) and people from the ends of the earth seeking the Lord and praising Him (vv. 25, 27, 28). He saw the rule of God – unto righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18) – being exerted in and over the nations of the world (v. 28). He saw the rich and the poor joining together in worship (v. 29); the people of the earth serving Him with their wealth and strength (v. 30); the salvation of the Lord reaching to generations (v. 31); and all the good and perfect plan and work brought to glorious conclusion (v. 31).

Jesus saw none of this with His eye, but only with the eyes of His heart, trusting in and meditating on the promises of Scripture. And this vision gave Him endurance and strength to fulfill His calling. As we see Him, seeing the Kingdom coming on earth as in heaven, let us ask the Lord for greater resolution, confidence, hope, and faithfulness – more of Jesus, by seeing Jesus more clearly.

For reflection

1. What is your understanding of the Kingdom of God? What is it? When should we expect it?
2. As you understand it, what does it mean to seek the Kingdom and righteousness of God *first*?
3. When you pray, "Thy Kingdom come...on earth as it is in heaven," what should you see with the eyes of your heart?

Next steps – Transformation: How will you seek the Kingdom today? In each situation and with every person you meet?

7 The Suffering Jesus

For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:2

The vision of Christ crucified

No Christian can think of the crucifixion of Jesus and not see some image of that gruesome but glorious event. We see Jesus on the cross. He is in agony, but at peace. He is suffering, but victorious. Like a lamb, He is silent before His slaughterers, but He speaks important words through His pain.

What do we see as we consider Jesus, hanging on the cross? I can't help but recall the words of that great hymn by Isaac Watts, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross":

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Watts' emphasis is on what we *see* of Jesus: the blood of Jesus, His head and hands and feet, the crown of thorns. I have no doubt that these are vivid and easily brought to mind by sincere believers in Jesus Christ.

But we recall that Jesus also *spoke* from the cross. And each of those brief words from Jesus conveys a feeling, an attitude, and a frame of mind, which we ought to be able to *see* on His face. It's the image of Jesus in His suffering, reflected in these last words, that I want us to consider in this final segment of our consideration of Jesus during His earthly sojourn.

Seven words, seven expressions

Jesus' first words from the cross are words of forgiveness: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Lk. 23:34). Amid His excruciating pain and suffering, we hear a tenderness in His voice, and we see the compassion of Jesus, seeking grace for even the worst of His enemies, even you and me.

Next, Jesus offers that compassion to one of the thieves crucified with Him: "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Lk. 23:43). Did their eyes meet as Jesus spoke? Did the dying thief see that compassionate look? That resolute visage, confident amid suffering of the victory to be realized in three short days?

The compassion and love on Jesus' face was next turned to His mother and the beloved disciple: "He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!'" (Jn. 19.26, 27) Here is the Good Shepherd, taking care of His most precious sheep, lovingly attending to their needs as His own life began to drain away.

Before long, the reality of what was actually happening to Him caught up with the pain Jesus experienced. He was bearing the world's sin in His own body, and we can see the anguish of our sin on His face as His Father turns away from Him for the first and only time: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" (Matt. 27.26)

All alone now, the judgment of God against our sin bearing down on Him with the eternal pain of separation from God, the Man of Sorrows whispered, "I thirst!" (Jn. 19.28) What weariness and sadness over our sins, coupled with the hope and joy set down before Him, must he have seen who held that sponge of sour wine up to the Savior's lips.

Then, having tasted the bitterness He was feeling throughout His soul and body, Jesus said, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19.30), and the relief and resignation on His face must have been slowly giving way to joy as He realized that His work of redemption was done, and the promise of salvation for all who believed in Him was about to be sprung in the world.

Finally, quoting from Psalm 31, Jesus restfully sighed, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit" (Lk. 23.46), as He died in peace.

Consider Jesus

As we consider Jesus hanging on the cross, we can see in His face, at one time or another, all those familiar looks that we saw throughout His earthly sojourn: welcoming a sinner into heaven, strong to bear the world's sin, compassionate toward those He loves, resolute, even poetic in drawing on Scripture to focus on His plight, and anguished – as in the garden – at the experience of being separated from His Father.

Our meditations on Christ, all our times considering Him with the eyes of our heart, must see in His crucifixion the fullness both of His deity and His humanity, the truest, fullest, most complete manifestation to us of the One Who died that we might live. Here the God/Man did what only God could do in cancelling the debt of our sin by becoming sin for us, for the whole world, and by bearing the infinite wrath of God in His own body. But as we survey the wondrous cross, and Jesus on it, let us also see Him seeing the joy that was set down before Him, and let us enter that joy with thanks and praise for our crucified but glorious, risen Savior and Lord.

For reflection or discussion

1. Is it your practice frequently to contemplate Jesus on the cross? Should it be?
2. As you think about Jesus on the cross, what do you most see in His face? Explain.
3. Using the last words of Jesus, write a prayer in response to each one. Use this prayer to meditate on Jesus and how you see Him in His suffering.

Next steps – Transformation: Take the words of "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" with you today, and sing part of it as often as the Lord prompts you to do so.

We Would See Jesus Part 3: The Incarnate Lord

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. As you think about Jesus during the course of His earthly ministry, what do you most often see in His face?
2. Why is it important that we try to see Jesus' face in as many ways as the Scriptures suggest?
3. Are you beginning to devote time to considering Jesus more fully? How might you do that?
4. Why is it of supreme importance that we consider Jesus as He was on the cross?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from the third part of our study, *We Would See Jesus*?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

Thank you.