

Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ by John Piper, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 2001 (30 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

Preface *How Can We Be Sure About Jesus?*

1. Believing on the Cross

It is a strange thing that, among folks who do not follow Jesus as their Lord and God, almost no one wants to say bad things about him. The same thing is true of crosses: They are nice to wear for jewelry, but nobody wants to die on one. The only crosses people want are domesticated ones. It makes sense, then, that a man who calculated his whole life to die on one would be dangerous to believe in. [Page 12]

2. The Value of Historical Research

...I am a pastor rather than a college teacher. I still value the path of scholarly historical research. In fact, I lean on it often. However, I am more immediately aware now that the vast majority of people in the world will never have the time or the tools to trace out all the evidences for the historical reliability of the New Testament. If Jesus is the Son of God, if he died for our sins and rose from the dead, and if God meant for people, two thousand years later, to have a well-founded faith, then there must be another path to know the real Jesus, other than by rigorous, academic, historical research. [Page 13]

3. The Glory of God

...the common path to sure knowledge of the real Jesus is this: Jesus, as he is revealed in the Bible, has a glory—an excellence, a spiritual beauty that can be seen as self-evidently true. It is like seeing the sun and knowing that it is light and not dark, or like tasting honey and knowing that it is sweet and not sour. There is no long chain of reasoning from premises to conclusions. There is a direct apprehension that this person is true and his glory is the glory of God. [Pages 13-14]

Chapter 1 *Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God: The Ultimate Aim of Jesus Christ*

4. The Riches of His Glory

The deepest longing of the human heart is to know and enjoy the glory of God. We were made for this. “Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth ...whom I have *created for My glory*,” says the Lord (Isaiah 43:6-7). To see it, to savor it, and to show it that is why we exist. The untracked, unimaginable stretches of the created universe are a parable about the inexhaustible “riches of His glory” (Romans 9:23) [Page 20]

5. Treasuring God's Glory above All

The point is this: We were made to know and treasure the glory of God above all things; and when we trade that treasure for images, everything is disordered. The sun of God's glory was made to shine at the center of the solar system of our soul. And when it does, all the planets of our life are held in their proper orbit. But when the sun is displaced, everything flies apart. The healing of the soul begins by restoring the glory of God to its flaming, all-attracting place at the center. [Page 21]

6. It Is Not about Me

Into the darkness of petty self-preoccupation has shone "the light of *the gospel of the glory of Christ*, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). The Christian Gospel is about "the glory of Christ," not about me. And when it is—in some measure—about me, it is not about my being made much of by God, but about God mercifully enabling me to enjoy making much of him forever. [Pages 21-22]

7. The Gospel Reveals God's Glory

The Christian Gospel is "the gospel of the glory of Christ" because its final aim is that we would see and savor and show the glory of Christ. For this is none other than the glory of God. "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Hebrews 1:3). "He is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). When the light of the Gospel shines in our hearts, it is "the Light of the knowledge of the glory of *God* in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). And when we "exult in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2), that hope is "the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13). The glory of Christ is the glory of God. [Page 22]

Chapter 2 *Jesus Is the Glory of God The Deity of Jesus Christ*

8. Being Satisfied In Him

Christ does not exist in order to make much of us. We exist in order to enjoy making much of him....To know the glories of Christ is an end, not a means. Christ is not glorious so that we get wealthy or healthy. Christ is glorious so that rich or poor, sick or sound, we might be satisfied in him. [Page27]

9. Jesus Christ Eternal

Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. Jesus Christ, the Person, never had a beginning. He is absolute Reality. He has the unparalleled honor and unique glory of being there first and always. He never came into being. He was eternally begotten. The father has eternally enjoyed

“the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Hebrews 1:3) in the Person of his Son. [Page 31]

Chapter 4 *The Indestructible Joy The Gladness of Jesus Christ*

10. Jesus Christ Knew Sorrow and Grief

...this man of indestructible joy was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me” (Matthew 26:38, RSV). This “great High Priest” is not unable to sympathize with us in our weaknesses, because he was tested in every way as a man like us (Hebrews 4:14-15). He wept with those who wept (John 11:35) and rejoiced with those who rejoiced (Luke 10:17, 21). He was hungry (Matthew 4:2), he was weary (John 4:6), he was forsaken (Matthew 26:56), and betrayed (Matthew 26:45), whipped (Matthew 27:26), mocked (Matthew 27:31), and crucified (Matthew 27:35). [Page 43]

11. The Joy of Christ

Through the agonies of Gethsemane and Golgotha, Jesus was sustained by indestructible joy. “For the joy that was set before him “he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2, RSV). And what was that all-sustaining gladness? It was the gladness of receiving worship from those he died to make glad in God. The Good Shepherd rejoices over one lost sheep (Matthew 18:13). How much more over countless armies of the ransomed! [Page 44]

12. Imitators of the Lord

Is there a lesson here for how we should suffer? Have you ever noticed that we are not only to imitate the Lord’s *suffering*, but the Lord’s joy in it? Paul said to the Thessalonians, “You became imitators. . . of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction with the *joy* of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 1:6, author’s translation). It was the joy of the Lord in affliction that filled this young church. [Page 44]

Chapter 5 *The Waves and Winds Still Know His Voice The Power of Jesus Christ*

13. The Lord Does What He Pleases

It is the glory of God to bare his mighty arm in wind and thunder. “The LORD is great Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth. . . . [He] makes lightnings for the rain, [and] brings forth the wind from His treasures” (Psalm 135:5-7). “Praise the LORD from the earth, sea monsters and all deeps; fire and hail, snow

and clouds; stormy wind, fulfilling His word” (Psalm 148:7-8). Isaac Watts had his feet on the earth and his head in heaven when he wrote, “Clouds arise, and tempests blow, by order from Thy throne.” [Page 51]

14. Absolute Master Over All

Fatalities, fevers, fish, food, fig trees. Anywhere you turn, Christ is the absolute master over all material substance. With a word he commands the dead to live again. “Lazarus, come forth!” (John 11:43). “Young man, arise!” (Luke 7:14), “‘Talitha kum!’ (which means, ‘Little girl ... get up!’)” (Mark 5:4 1). He rebuked a fever and it left Peter’s mother-in-law (Luke 4:39). He planned for a fish to swallow a coin and then get caught with Peter’s hook (Matthew 17:27). He took five loaves and fed five thousand men (Matthew 14:19-21). And he made a fig tree wither with his curse (Mark 11:21).

Now we have a choice. Worship or curse. [Pages 52-53]

15. Our Father Knows Best

Will we worship or will we curse the One who rules the world? Shall sinners dictate who should live and who should die? Or shall we say with Hannah, “The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up” (1 Samuel 2:6, NIV)? And shall we, with ashes on our heads, worship with Job, “Blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21)? Will we learn from James that there is good purpose in it all: “You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen *the purpose* of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful” (James 5:11, RSV)? Should we not then face the wind and stand on the waves of affliction and sing with Katharina von Schlegel,

*Be still, my soul! Your God will undertake
To guide the future as He has the past;
Your hope, your confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall he bright at last.
Be still, my soul! The waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.*

“BE STILL MY SOUL” [Pages 53-54]

16. Dependency on The Lord

A PRAYER

O Lord, the suffering in the world is so widespread and the pain is so great! Have mercy, and waken the souls of suffering millions to the hope of some relief now and unsurpassed joy in the age to come. Send your church, o God, with relief and with the word of the Gospel that there is forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ and that no suffering here is

worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed to the children of God. Protect your church, Father, from callous thoughts about calamities that leave millions destitute, and protect her also from cowing to critics, like Job's wife, who cannot trust the wisdom and power and goodness of Christ in the midst of inexplicable misery. Oh, help our unbelief Incline our hearts to your Word and to its assurances that you "work all things according to the counsel of your will" and that "no purpose of yours can be thwarted" and that you are doing good and acting wisely in ways that we cannot now even dream. Keep us in peace, o Lord, and forbid that we murmur and complain. Grant us humble and submissive hearts under your mighty hand. Teach us to wait and watch for your final and holy purposes in all things. Grant that we would "rejoice in hope" even when present circumstances bring us to tears. Open the eyes of our hearts to see the greatness of our inheritance in Christ, and send us with tender hands to touch with mercy the miseries of the world. In Jesus' name we pray. amen. [Pages 54-55]

Chapter 6 *Something Greater Than Solomon Is Here The Wisdom of Jesus Christ*

17. The Great "I Am"

Jesus not only knows all of us as we are today, he also knows what we will think and do tomorrow. He knows all things that will come to pass. John's Gospel stresses this, because John sees it as part of Jesus' divine majesty. "Jesus [knew] all the things that were coming upon Him" (John 18:4). On the basis of this knowledge he foretold numerous things that his friends and enemies would do. "Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him" (John 6:64). "From now on," he said, "I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am" (John 13:19, author's translation).

In other words, the reason he foretold these things is so that we might believe that "he is." Is what? That he is the divine Son of God. "I AM" is the name for God in Exodus 3:14 and the designation of deity in Isaiah 43:10. This, very likely, is the way Jesus understood it when he used the words absolutely: "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58). Jesus wants us to believe that he is God. That is why he says, "Behold, I have told you in advance" (Matthew 24:25). His foreknowledge is essential to his divinity. [Pages 58-59]

18. All Knowing

"You know all things" is a general and unqualified statement of John's Gospel—Jesus knows all that is and all that shall come to pass. [Page 60]

19. Worthy of Our Highest Praise

...let us bow down and worship Jesus Christ. Even if we are impressed with the scholarship of man and the achievements of scientific knowledge, let us not play the fool by trumpeting the wonder of these tiny chirps while ignoring the thunderclap of Christ's omniscience. Jesus alone is worthy of our highest admiration. Jesus alone is worthy of our trust. He can show us the Father (Matthew 11:27). He can give us irresistible wisdom (Luke 2 1:15). He can see how to make all things work together for our good (Romans 8:28). Not one of his judgments about anything is ever mistaken (John 8:16). He teaches the way of God with infallible truthfulness (Matthew 22:16). Trust him. Admire him. Follow him. For "in [him] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). [Page 61]

Chapter 7 *The Glorious Poverty of a Bad Reputation The Desecration of Jesus Christ*

20. Truth Will Be Opposed

When someone hates your cause, all strategies of love will be slandered, even opposite ones. Jesus was astonished at this in his generation: "To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places" (Matthew 11:16). They won't dance with the flute and they won't weep with the dirge. For them the music of truth is never right. John the Baptist was the dirge. Jesus was the flute. And his generation would hear neither. How shall these two be silenced? Slander.

"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" (Matthew 11:18-19). Truth came dressed in camel skins and eating locusts and living in the wilderness and calling kings adulterers and doing no miracles and dying for a dancing girl. And this was not acceptable. So truth came sociably and went to feasts and made fine wine and let a harlot wash its feet. But this too was not acceptable. [Pages 66-67]

Chapter 8 *The Incomparable Sufferings The Anguish of Jesus Christ*

21. Jesus Gave His Life

...the suffering and weakness of Jesus were a work of his sovereign power. "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (John 10:18, RSV). He freely chose to join the father's design for his own suffering and death. [Pages 76-77]

Chapter 9 *The Glory of Rescuing Sinners, Not Removing Satan The Saving Sacrifice of Jesus Christ*

22. Christ's Beauty and Worth Revealed

The glory of Christ is seen in his absolute right and power to annihilate or incapacitate Satan and all demons. But the reason he refrains from destroying and disabling them altogether is to manifest more clearly his superior beauty and worth. If Christ obliterated all devils and demons now (which he could do), his sheer power would be seen as glorious, but his superior beauty and worth would not shine as brightly as when humans renounce the promises of Satan and take pleasure in the greater glory of Christ. [Page 81]

23. Drawn By the Beauty of His Grace

If God had simply terminated Satan, then it would not have been so clear that God is *both* stronger *and* infinitely more to be desired than Satan. God wills for his glory to shine forth not only through acts of physical power, but also through acts of moral and spiritual power that display the beauty of his grace with lavish colors. To take sinners out of Satan's hands by virtue of Christ's sin-bearing sacrifice and his law-fulfilling obedience to the Father was a more glorious victory than mere annihilation of the enemy. [Page 85]

Chapter 10 *The Incarnate Wealth of the Compassion of God The Mercies of Jesus Christ*

24. His Mercy Revealed

... the focus of the New Testament is that the wealth of God's glory is, at its apex, the wealth of his mercy. This is something the world takes very lightly: "the riches of [God's] kindness and forbearance and patience" (Romans 2:4, RSV). God created and redeemed the world so that he might "make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory" (Romans 9:23). Or, to put it another way, he creates and saves his people "in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7). The universe exists primarily to display the wealth of the glory of the mercy of God for the enjoyment of his redeemed people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. [Page 90]

25. The Wealth of God's Mercy

... Jesus' entire ministry was shaped by the insight that mercy is the ultimate meaning of God's law. And since Jesus came not to abolish but to fulfill that law (Matthew 5:17), he was the incarnation and manifestation of the wealth of the mercy of God. [Page 95]

26. The Lord Is Merciful

The place where mercies are kept is at the throne of God. Here is infinite wealth and infinite power and infinite wisdom. And all this stands ready in the service of mercy, because of Jesus Christ, the mercy of God incarnate. Whether you learn this through pleasure, or learn it through pain, like Job, whatever you do, learn it: Lord is full of compassion and is merciful” (James 5:11) [Page 96]

Chapter 11 *The Tough Side The Severity of Jesus Christ*

27. The Tough Side of Jesus

The glory of Jesus Christ is that he is always out of sync ‘with the world and therefore always relevant for the world. If he fit nicely, he would be of little use. The effort to remake the Jesus of the Bible so that he fits the spirit of one generation makes him feeble in another. Better to let him be what he is, because it is often the offensive side of Jesus that we need most.

Especially offensive to the modern, western sentiment is the tough, blunt, fierce form of Jesus’ love. People with thin skin would often have felt hurt by Jesus’ piercing tongue. People who identify love only with soft and tender words and ways would have been repeatedly outraged by the stinging, almost violent, language of the Lord. [Page 99]

28. Expressions of Love

What we meet in the biting language of Christ is a form of love that corresponds with the real world of corruption and the dullness of our hearts and the magnitude of what is at stake in our choices. If there were no great evils and no deaf hearts and no eternal consequences, perhaps the only fitting forms of love would be a soft touch and tender words. But such a world does not kill the Son of God and have his disciples. There is no such world. [Page 100]

Chapter 12 *Invincible Life The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*

29. Christ's Resurrection

...the resurrection of Jesus assures all his future work on behalf of his people: his authority and rule over everything in the universe (Matthew 28:18); his priestly intercession on our behalf (Romans 8:34); his advocacy with God the Father (1 John 2:1); his protecting, comforting presence with us to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20); and his final coming to earth in glory to give rest to us and retribution to all who “do not know God and to those do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8) [Page 112]

30. The Purpose of Christ's Resurrection

And the resurrection of Jesus therefore secures all the blessings he obtained for us in his death. The resurrection vindicates the sufficiency of the cross and seals the certainty and finality of our justification by faith. “[Jesus] was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:25). All the promises of God, purchased by the blood of Christ, become ours in everlasting perpetuity because of the resurrection of Jesus. Forgiveness, for example: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). But he has been raised, and so forgiveness is real and permanent. “He always lives to make intercession for [us]” (Hebrews 7:25). [Pages 112-113]