

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Scripture Memory		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	57		Gary L.W. Johnson
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I AM THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE (Part III)

Questions and Answers: This portion of The Gospel of John has them in abundance! Thomas's bewildering question in verse 5, like so many questions in the Fourth Gospel, provides our Lord with the opportunity to give the disciples a lesson in theology 101. The late F. F. Bruce, one of the great Biblical scholars of the 20th century, observed, "Jesus is going to the Father, and his disciples are to follow him; for them he is himself the way to the Father. He is, in fact, the only way by which men and women may come to the Father; there is no other way. If this seems offensively exclusive, let it be borne in mind that the one who makes this claim is the incarnate Word, the revealer of the Father. If God has no avenue of communication with mankind apart from his Word (incarnate or otherwise), mankind has no avenue of approach to God apart from that same Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us in order to supply such an avenue of approach. Jesus' claim, understood in the light of the prologue to the Gospel, is inclusive, not exclusive. All truth is God's truth, as all life is God's life; but God's truth and God's life are incarnate in Jesus. It has been suggested that, in the Semitic language which Jesus spoke, the nouns *truth* and *life* were governed by *the way*, as though he said, *I am the way of truth and life – I am the true and living way*. This is no doubt an attractive suggestion (cf. the mention in Heb. 10:20 of *the new and living way which he opened for us . . . through his flesh*); but that is not how our Evangelist understood the words. For him the three nouns are co-ordinate, and are best understood by us as they were by him: *I am the way and the truth and the life*. Jesus is not only the way to God; he is the truth of God – how could he be otherwise, since he is the embodiment of God's self-revelation? – and he is the life of God, *the true God and eternal life* (1 John 5:20), manifested on earth to give his flesh *for the life of the world* (John 6:51)."¹

I. THE WAY.

A. Jesus is the Only Way to God . . . Jesus clearly claims to be the only way to God – John 14:6. As Peter would later proclaim, there is no salvation but through Him – cf. Acts 4:12. Ridderbos notes that this, "the core statement of this entire Gospel – is striking because in this last and all-encompassing *I am* statement he, as the departing one, calls himself the *way*. It is a way he not only points to but *is*, the only way that gives access to the Father. And it is in that function that he is also *the truth and the life*. He is the truth as the reliable one, the one who is what he says he is and does what he says he will do, just as he is the *true* vine who will in fact yield fruit (cf. Jr. 2:21). For that reason he is also the life that is from God and that imparts itself as *the light of humans* (1:4), so that they can know the Father as the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom the Father has sent (17:3). In all these core sayings Jesus posits himself in his exclusivity as the one sent by the Father and hence as the only way: *No one comes to the Father but by me*. Other ways present themselves, but they do not prove to be true in accordance with *God is light and in him there is no darkness at all* (1 Jn. 1:5)."²

B. How Jesus is the Way to the Father . . .

1. By revealing Him, stressed in the gospel of John = 14:7-9; cf. 1:18; 12:44-45.
2. By opening the way to Him, emphasized in the book of Hebrews –10:19-20.
3. By serving as our high priest, another theme in Hebrews –2:17-18; 4:14-16; 10:21-22.
4. He now intercedes for us
 - a. As our advocate – 1 John 2:1
 - b. At the right hand of God --- Romans 8:34
 - c. The one (and only) Mediator between God and man – 1 Timothy 2:5
 - d. Who ever lives to intercede for us! – Hebrews 7:24-25

By virtue of His life on earth (His active obedience), His death on the cross (His passive obedience), and now His service in heaven, Jesus is truly the only way to God!

II. **THE TRUTH.** “He was the *truth*. Truth is the scarcest commodity in the world. All the philosophers had sought for it; none had attained it. No one mind was great enough to grasp it; no one personality was pure enough to achieve it by conduct. Truth is neither an abstract system of integrated propositions, nor is it an impersonal ethic contained in many rules. It is both the reality and the ethic expressed in a person who is more flexible than legal rigidity and incomprehensible abstraction, and who is, notwithstanding, unchanging and consistent. Christ spoke with final authority in words adapted to human understanding.”³

When Jesus speaks of truth, it describes that which corresponds to reality, what is factual and absolute, not relative.

A. How Jesus is the Truth . . .

1. He proclaims that truth is real and knowable – John 8:32.
2. He proclaims that truth can set one free from the bondage of sin -- John 8:32-34.

Finally, the truth is not represented by Jesus by what he said and his teachings; the truth *is* Jesus. While the *way* offers man direction, the *truth* – as seen in chapter 8:32 – gives him freedom. Jesus though is more than that; he is *life itself* (we have already seen this in Matthew’s statement recorded in chapter 11, verse 25). These three words reaffirm the uniqueness of Jesus, who identifies himself with God. Therefore, there are three aspects which prove who Jesus was. In this respect, as Leon Morris notes, “*Way* stresses the fact that mere physical existence matters little. The only life worthy of the name is that which Jesus brings, for He is life itself.”⁴

III. THE LIFE.

A. He offers Abundant Life . . .

1. As He promised in His discourse as the Good Shepherd – John 10:10-11.
2. Jesus offers a peace the world cannot give – John 14:27; 16:33; Philippians 4:6-7.
3. He gives us His love, which passes knowledge – John 15:10; cf. Ephesians 3:19.
4. He provides His joy, that is inexpressible – John 15:11; cf. 1 Peter 1:8.

CONCLUSION: “All three concepts are active and dynamic. The way *brings* to God; the truth *makes* men *free*; the life *produces* fellowship. How are these three related? As more or less separate, wholly coordinate entities? Or, as forming a single concept: *the true and living way*? It is not necessary to choose either of these alternatives. *Truth* and *life* are nouns, not adjectives. Christ *is* the truth and the life, just as

well as he *is* the way. Nevertheless, the context indicates that the idea of *the way* predominates. The meaning appears to be: *I am the way because I am the truth and the life*. When Jesus reveals God's redemptive truth which sets men free from the enslaving power of sin, and when he imparts the seed of life, which produces fellowship with the Father, then and thereby he, as the way (which they themselves, by sovereign grace, have chosen), has brought them to the Father. Hence, Jesus continues: **No one comes to the Father but by me**. Since men are absolutely dependent upon Christ for their knowledge of redemptive truth and also for the spark that causes that truth to live in their souls (and their souls to become alive to that truth), it follows that no one comes to the Father but through him. With Christ removed there can be no redemptive *truth*, no everlasting *life*; hence, no *way* to the Father, Cf. Acts 4:12. Both the absoluteness of the Christian religion and the urgent necessity of Christian Missions is clearly indicated."⁵

ENDNOTES

¹F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John & Epistles of John* (Eerdmans, 1983), P. 298.

²H. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1997), p. 493.

³M. C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Eerdmans, 1948), p. 215.

⁴L. Morris, *The Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1964), p. 668.

⁵W. Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John* (Baker, 1954), p. 268.