

## Joe Megacz - Pictures Of Jesus

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My talk this morning will be along a similar theme to draw our hearts closer to Jesus and to strengthen our relationship with him by considering his various roles in our lives. Our precious Jesus. As we sang in our opening hymn.

This discourse will be a little unusual for me because I won't be using PowerPoint to illustrate my thoughts. Instead, I'm going to ask you to use your imaginations to illustrate my thoughts to illustrate the pictures of Jesus in your minds. What does he look like? Unfortunately, the Bible doesn't give us any physical description of Jesus to help our imaginations. Now, the Bible does give us some physical characteristics of other Bible characters.

We know, for example, that Saul, King Saul was tall, Samson had long hair, David was handsome, and so on, but no such hints or clues about Jesus. But today I'm not going to ask you to imagine Jesus as how he looks, but rather I'm going to ask you to imagine his character or his personality, for which we do find quite a bit of help in the Scriptures. I'll describe a series of illustrations or roles of Jesus found in the Bible, and I'll ask you to use your imaginations as I go through them to see in your mind's eyes these various pictures of Jesus. But before we begin, a disclaimer.

Many years ago, Brother Carl Hagensik gave an excellent discourse entitled Portraits of Jesus. You can find it and listen to it on Christian Resources. Now, I did not listen to Brother Carl's talk in preparation for this talk, but I will in the next week or so to see how similar our treatments of the subject might be, and I'm sure I will discover that his talk is much better than mine.

Let's begin by imagining that we're on a group tour, walking through a gallery of pictures of Jesus. We all form a line as we approach the entrance. The sign above the door says Exhibit Pictures of Jesus. Enter Here. We enter the room.

It's large and well lit. The temperature is comfortable. The air is fresh and pure, but also has a light, lovely scent. There are upholstered benches in the middle of the room to sit on and enjoy the pictures of Jesus in a leisurely manner.

Other people are here as well, but the room is quiet. Everyone is respecting the peacefulness of the space. We come to the first picture. The frame is made of solid copper, strong and sturdy, not smooth and shiny, but rather textured, even distressed. It conveys a sense of value, of merit.

Next to the frame, there is a small plaque on the wall with the title of this work, and it says Jesus as the Savior of the World. Below the title are two scripture citations, Luke 2:11 and John 4:42. I'll read them both. Luke 2:11 for unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior which is Christ the lord, and John 4:42, which was spoken by Samaritans to the woman at the well who talked with Jesus two days earlier, the Samaritan said unto the woman, now we believe not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.

Now you turn your attention to the picture within this copper frame, and it shows. Well, what does it show? Use your imaginations. What picture comes to your mind when you think of Jesus in his role as the Savior of mankind? Is it Jesus on the cross completing the ransom sacrifice of his perfect human life which qualified him to be the redeemer of all men?

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Is it Jesus reaching out to Peter, who cried, lord, save me, when he was about to drown in the turbulent sea of Galilee when Jesus bid Peter to walk to him in the midst of the waters? Do you picture Jesus preaching the gospel of the kingdom to a gathering crowd, comforting them with the promises and the salvation of the good news? Or is it Jesus performing miracles of healing the sick and the lame and raising Lazarus up from the dead, all pictures themselves of the blessings that will flow to mankind in due time as a result of the work of Jesus as the Savior of the world? Or is it a picture unique to you and your relationship with Jesus as your Savior, an image so personal that it is not taken from any account of Scripture. No artist has ever drawn the picture you see in your mind's eye of Jesus in his role as the world's Savior and in your relationship to him as your personal Savior.

And perhaps you even see yourself with him in this picture, standing beside him.

I have a theory that whoever is drawn to Jesus and becomes a true follower of his does so to satisfy a deep personal need of one sort or another to fill a void in their lives, and it is not the same need or void in everyone who seeks to have relationship with our Lord. Each one has their own particular need which, in the words of hymn number 47, Jesus has satisfied. Jesus is mine, and as I present these roles of Jesus and ask you to use your imaginations to picture them, I'll suggest what might be the need, the void in someone's life that Jesus in each particular role might satisfy.

I'd like to suggest that for those who most appreciate this picture of Jesus as the Savior, of the world appreciate Jesus even more so as their own personal individual Savior because they recognize their need to be saved deeply, even painfully. But saved from what? For those who don't understand the truth of God's plan, it is to be saved from a hell of torment after they die. But for those whose eyes have been opened, it is a salvation from our own sinful selves, salvation from our own undone condition, salvation from the penalty of death that came upon Adam and all mankind after he disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, salvation from estrangement from God. Such have an aching desire and need to be right with God, to be acceptable to and approved by him, to be saved from their sinful condition of which they are painfully aware and unable to escape, to be able to call Him Abba Father, to not be cast out from him, away from him in his favor and the way, the truth and the life to this condition of being right with God is Jesus the Savior of the world and our own personal Savior.

No one comes to the Father but by Him, and such who have can say to themselves, Jesus not only died for the sins of the world, he died for mine.

And more than this, salvation from our inherited sin in Adam. Jesus is our personal Savior every day when he rescues us from our daily failings and shortcomings, and we'll come to another picture of Jesus a little later which illustrates this role of his in our daily lives.

So to those who have this deeply felt need to be right with God, to be saved, this picture of Jesus is a most precious one. Do you see yourself in this picture, raised up from your fallen, undone condition, to stand up and be recognized, justified before your Savior?

Well, in my imagination of our group tour, there's a crowd starting to build up behind us because we're spending so long enjoying and appreciating this first picture, and so it's time that we move along so that they can get a closer look at this first picture as well. So let's move on.

We come to the second picture of Jesus and once again we first notice the frame. It is made of highly polished silver, simple and sleek with clean lines, strong and utilitarian, and as you look more

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closely, you notice that the two side edges of the frame are sharp like a knife. So sharp that if you handled the frame carelessly or unskillfully, you might cut yourself. The small title plaque on the wall next to this frame reads Jesus as Rabbi and in parentheses, teacher.

There are two scripture citations on the title plaque. John 1, 35, 38 and John 20:15 and 16, I'll read them both. John 1:35, 38 takes place the day after John the Baptist baptized Jesus again. The next day after John stood and two of his disciples and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, behold the Lamb of God, and the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

Then Jesus turned and saw them following and saith unto them, what seek ye? They said unto him, rabbi, which is to say, being interpreted, master, where dwellest thou?

The second scripture, perhaps more familiar, John 20:15 and 16, takes place when Jesus, after his resurrection, found Mary weeping at his sepulchre. Jesus saith unto her, woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary, she turned herself and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, master.

Jewish rabbis have always been skilled and knowledgeable teachers. As such, they often attracted followers who, seeking knowledge and wisdom long before Google and Wikipedia, learned from other men whom they respected as their master and teacher. As the Ethiopian eunuch reading the prophecy of Isaiah, answered Philip, when asked if he understood what he was reading, replied in Acts 8:31, how can I except some man? Teach me.

The picture within this silver frame is once again whatever you imagine it to be. This picture of Jesus is my personal favorite, so I'll share with you my imaginary picture of Jesus as rabbi or teacher. It has actually been drawn by celebrated artists many times since Jesus Day, and it shows Jesus on a grassy hillside, speaking to a small group of his disciples seated around him, their eyes fixed on him with undivided attention as they listened to his explanation of the parables which he had previously spoken to a larger group. The explanation of the deeper truths hidden in the parables the larger crowds couldn't understand, but now were being revealed to his closest followers.

However, my imaginary version of that picture differs from all the others that have ever been drawn in one significant detail. One of the followers seated around Jesus in this picture is me. I see myself in this picture. I said before that I have a theory that people are drawn to Jesus for various reasons, to satisfy some deep personal need in their lives. For myself, I was drawn to Jesus as my rabbi and teacher who provided the answers to all my questions about mankind and myself.

Where did we come from? Why do we die? Is there life after death? Now, growing up as a Bible student, I had the blessing of being taught the simple answers to those questions in the Bible stories and other lessons from the faithful sisters and brothers who taught the children's Bible classes, and I am so grateful to them.

But as a teenager I needed more. In high school I valued the education I received in the sciences which taught me the laws of physics and chemistry and mathematics, the laws which explained how the universe worked in such orderly and predictable ways, but not why the universe worked in such orderly and predictable ways.

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Thankfully, our ecclesia back then was blessed with gifted elders who related to the young people and provided an advanced education for us in the truth. So I picked their brains whenever I could. I attended the adult studies on my own and began my journey into the truth of the harvest message. As the Ethiopian eunuch said, how can I understand these deep truths and get the answers to my questions unless some men guide me?

And I am so grateful to all of my teachers that I have tried to pass it on to pay it forward to the new generations of teenagers and young adults today.

As sort of a humorous aside, speaking of my years as a teenager before cell phones and electronic digital Bibles, some of you my age will remember this. We all carried around our heavy paper wide margin Bibles in some sort of a protective case, sometimes vinyl with a zipper, and sometimes just made of cardboard, all battered and wrapped in duct tape, and on that Bible case, whatever it was made of, some of us put a sticker, kind of like the bumper stickers on cars that were fashionable in those days, and those bumper stickers read, the answers are inside.

The answers are inside. It was true then, it is still true today, and it will always be true, and I am so grateful that I was drawn to Jesus as my teacher and received those answers. Perhaps some of you were likewise drawn to Jesus as the fountain of all wisdom, the teacher of the polished silver of truth, a two edged sword which could provide the answers to all your questions about life and death and the present evil world that weighs so heavily on our minds.

Searching for those answers elsewhere, we could never find the peace and rest that comes from the understanding of the truth, and to those of us, Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest from your mental searching for answers. For those of us, like myself, who were drawn to Jesus because of our deep personal need for answers to the perplexing questions of life, this picture is the most precious one.

We move along to the next picture in our imaginary gallery. The frame is rather unusual. Unlike the others, it is not made of metal, but of wood. Round rods of acacia wood covered with cloth, not a fine cloth like silk or linen, but a thick, soft cloth like unprocessed wool. The two rods forming the sides of the frame extend upward beyond the top of the frame and then form into hooks which allow this frame and picture to be hung on pegs protruding from the wall of the gallery.

The title plaque on the wall next to the picture reads, Jesus as the Good Shepherd. There are two scripture citations on the plaque, John 10:14 and John 10:27. I'll read them both. John 10:14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine and verse 27 my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me now many artists have created their impressions of Jesus as the good shepherd. You have no doubt seen pictures drawn from the artist's imagination, but how do you picture Jesus in his role as your good shepherd?

Now, probably the two most prominent characteristics of a good shepherd are his love for his sheep and his tender, watchful care over them. Jesus in his role as our good shepherd, of course, provides us with abundant love and watchful care which bring us great comfort and peace of mind.

Well, according to that theory that I mentioned before, what might be the deeply felt need on the part of those for whom this picture is their favorite? I think that those who are drawn to Jesus because of his well known love for all of God's children have not felt much love in their lives, either as children growing up or even as adults. The need to be loved is as essential a part of life as is the need for food and water. Now there are many in the world, and some, perhaps even among the

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brethren, who were brought up in the home of a dysfunctional family, a home devoid of parental or brotherly love. There are many in the world, and perhaps even among the brethren, who feel that they are trapped in a loveless relationship or marriage.

These from whom natural love, filial love, was or is withheld, find their need satisfied in the agape love freely given to them by our Good Shepherd, and for many of those, the void in their hearts and lives is filled by Jesus as their good shepherd. In addition to loving his sheep, our good shepherd cares for us as well, providing for our needs and comfort. Three of my favorite scriptures along this line are 1st Peter 3, 7 casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you Philippians 4, 6 Be careful for nothing or, as the Diaglot renders it, be not anxious for anything and first John 4:18 perfect love casteth out fear all familiar scriptures which, taken together, complete the picture of Jesus as our loving and caring good shepherd. For those who come to Jesus to receive his loving and tender care, this picture of Jesus as our good shepherd is the most treasured.

Do you see yourself in this picture as one of the good Shepherd's flock of sheep?

We move on in our imaginary gallery to the next picture of Jesus. The frame is unlike all the others because it is a composite of several materials. There is leather and wood and iron as well as some other metals and fabrics, all neatly fitted and melded together into a sturdy, coherent the texture is not uniform, it's uneven, smooth metal in some places, wood and bulky, rough leather and other fabrics in other parts of the frame. You think of reaching your hand out to touch the frame and feel its texture, but then you catch the watchful eye of the gallery usher standing just a few feet.

The nameplate next to the frame reads, Jesus as the Captain of our Salvation. The scripture citation below the title is Hebrews 2:10 for it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.

The title of captain suggests a military appearance to our imaginations, and so we quickly think of Jesus and ourselves in this picture, wearing the armor of God, engaged in the battle of the new creature against our three great enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. As soldiers we have enlisted for life, and we are exhorted in the words of Second Timothy 2, 3. Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. This battle is not literal but rather spiritual, as 2nd Corinthians 2, 3 and 4 puts it. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds I said before that I have a theory that people are drawn to Jesus in his various roles for various reasons to satisfy a need or void in their lives. What deep personal need might draw someone to Jesus as the captain of their salvation? While the military is rightfully known for its order and demonstration of strong leadership in times of battle, perhaps those who are drawn to Jesus as the captain of their salvation desire a leader to follow. A trustworthy, competent leader of unimpeachable character, someone who will lead them according to fixed principles of truth and righteousness. A leader whose orders and instructions they would gladly obey and follow into even the fiercest of battles.

Such a leader would give guidance to the soldiers under his command, and with such guidance, decisions from the smaller matters to the weightier issues of life would become easy. His will would become their will. Once the will of their captain was discerned, the matter would be resolved, and the appropriate action would be apparent and taken. But how are those orders that will communicated if the battle is not literal? On reprint page 4468 is this gem Thought you've heard it

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before.

Reprint page 4468. Brother Russell, quoting another writer, says, I seek in the beginning to get my heart in such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to a great delusion.

I seek the will or Spirit of God through or in connection with the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone, without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Spirit guides us at all, it will do so according to the Scriptures, and never contrary to them. Next, I take into account providential circumstances.

These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and His Spirit. I ask God in prayer to reveal his will to me aright, and so thus by the prayer to God, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to deliberate judgment according to the best of my knowledge and opportunity, and if my mind is thus at peace, I proceed accordingly.

Prayer and the Word of God the good soldier's lifeline of communication to the captain of his salvation. For those who have a deep need of structure, guidance, and direction in their lives, this picture of Jesus is the most precious.

We move along to the next picture of Jesus, which is the most unusual of them all, because there is no picture, no frame, no picture, but instead a table pushed up against the wall. It's a sturdy table made of wood, highly polished, very official looking. On the wall in front of this table, high up, is a round wooden disc like you see on the walls of government buildings, and it has the scales of justice carved into it.

On this side of the table facing the wall, are two chairs side by side. The entire display reminds you of a courtroom. On the table in front of the chair on the right is a plaque, a name plaque that reads, Jesus as your advocate. The Scripture citation below is a long one. First John 15:26 I'll read that First John 15 to 26.

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not, and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

And hereby we do know that we know him. If we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoso keepeth his word in Him. Verily is the love of God perfected.

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Hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked, End of quote.

The importance of this picture to us is of course, the fact that despite our best efforts to walk in the light, to live a righteous life, we all sin. But when we do, we have an advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous. What is an advocate? In many European languages, the word for lawyer is advocate, our English word advocate with a European pronunciation. So when you think of literal lawyers, how do you picture them?

They are typically highly intelligent, knowledgeable about the law and courtroom proceedings, well dressed and eloquent, sometimes forcefully so to present their clients cases in a manner to gain a favorable outcome. So an advocate is one who is on your side, sometimes literally at your side, speaking on your behalf to a higher authority. That is our advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous. When we pray to confess our sins and shortcomings to the Father and ask his forgiveness, do you picture your advocate standing beside you or kneeling beside you on your behalf to the Heavenly Father? He is there and a favorable outcome is assured.

Forgiveness is granted to all those who repent and ask for forgiveness in his name. No matter how many times we mess up.

Now There is another dimension to Jesus as our advocate that may not be apparent on the surface. The Greek word translated advocate in 1 John 2:1 is Parakletos. It appears only five times in the New Testament, and one of those other times is in the Gospel of John, chapter 14, verse 6. Jesus speaking John 14:6 says, and I will pray the Father and he will give you another comforter that he may abide with you forever.

The word comforter is translated from the same Greek word parakletos that is Translated Advocate in First John 2. 1. Now we know from our studies in the Context of John 14 that Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit when he used that word parakletos. The Holy Spirit is the other comforter that Jesus would send to his disciples after he went away and was no longer with them in person. The Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus, or really by God on the day of Pentecost and throughout the Gospel age to be our comforter.

So, getting back to my theory, what might be a deep personal need which would be satisfied by Jesus as our advocate along with the Holy Spirit as our comforter. Now, at first it might sound similar to the need we described by those who treasure the picture of Jesus as their Savior, Jesus who died for their sins to make them right with God. But I think the deep need felt by those who treasure this picture of Jesus as their advocate and the Holy Spirit as their comforter is a need to continue in their relationship with God when they do sin as we all do, and to be comforted and reassured by the knowledge that forgiveness is granted to the repentant Jesus as our Savior enables us to begin our relationship to God as His Son. Jesus as our advocate allows us to continue our relationship to God even though we fail to live up to our promise to him again and again. Jesus as our advocate rescues us from our daily failings and shortcomings before the bar of justice.

For many of us, this picture is the most precious one.

Well, in my imagination I see a gallery usher coming over to our group to tell us that the exhibit is closing soon and it's time to finish our tour and leave. As we make our way to the exit, we quickly pass by many other pictures just like the ones we stop to appreciate more leisurely. We note the

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titles on these little plaques next to each frame. Among them are Jesus as the High Priest of Our Profession, Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus as an Animal, the Lamb of God, Even Jesus as Inanimate Objects, A vine with branches, a Door, a chief Cornerstone, which one of them is your favorite picture of Jesus.

Well, now we come to the exit of our imaginary gallery, and it's a little unusual, as many things have been in this gallery. There is a small, separate walled off room in the corner of the gallery, sort of like a foyer with a doorway into it and a sign above that doorway that says exit. The doorway has no door, but it has an opening covered by a thick, colorful curtain. We draw the curtain aside and pass beyond it one at a time.

The first thing we notice about this room is that strangely, it is larger on the inside than it is on the outside. Are you using your imaginations?

The lighting in this exit foyer is much brighter than it was in the main gallery. We look up at the ceiling and there doesn't seem to be a ceiling, simply a continuous white light brighter than the light in the outer gallery.

Across the room is a wall with a single picture frame. We walk up to it and see a majestic frame of solid gold, much larger than all of the others in the main gallery, and it is elaborately carved with intricate pictures and words and symbols all around it. There is a small table in front of and below the picture, and on that table is a single white stone with something written on it. The title plaque on the wall next to the frame says, Jesus as He is.

The scripture citation is 1 John 3, 1, 2. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

The picture within this golden frame is in my imagination, blank. Here, I think even the best of our creativity fails us to imagine seeing Jesus as he is. A divine being, clothed with glory, honor and immortality, the embodiment of all the pictures of Jesus we have ever, ever read and seen and imagined.

So what is our motivation? What is our deeply felt need to make our calling and election sure and to see Jesus as He is and as we shall be in heaven? Now, certainly it is our mission and it is our vision for the present and our goal for eternity of faithful to our covenant of sacrifice, to be with him, to be like him, and to be able to see him in all his glory. That is our vision, that is our mission. But what is our motivation?

What spurs us on to zeal to make our calling and election sure so that we can be in this picture, this final picture with Jesus, there is a wonderful discourse by brother Benjamin Barton, a contemporary of Brother Russell, entitled the Highest Motive. In it, Brother Barton suggests that our highest motive for entering into the narrow way and running the course set before us is the same as it was for our Lord when he prayed the words of John chapter 17 on the night before he was crucified. John 17, verse 1. Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee.

Glorify thy Son, so that thy Son also may glorify thee. This is our highest motive, to glorify God for eternity in a way we cannot on this side of the veil, to participate in raising all of mankind to human perfection so that they too can glorify God for eternity on earth.



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Our tour of the exhibit pictures of Jesus is complete. May we keep these pictures of Jesus in our minds over the next few days as we approach the night of the memorial, I will close with this question which asks each of you to use your imaginations just one more time.

Imagine you have just completed your walk along the narrow way on this side of the veil. Your eyes close, and then in a twinkling, in the blink of an eye, they open again and you are changed into your spiritual body. When you open your eyes in the heavenly kingdom, you will first be surrounded by loved ones you knew before, and then soon enough you will be escorted into the presence of Jesus amidst the sounds of a heavenly choir of angels, and you will see him as he is. How will you react?

Your mind races in anticipation of what you are about to see, trying to form a picture of what is about to happen and what you will do. You remember the pictures of Jesus you knew so well on the other side of the veil, and then you remember your favorite picture of Jesus as you come near to his divine presence. What do you imagine? What will you do?

What will be the first action that you take in meeting Jesus in whatever of the many roles that were so valuable to you? Will you kneel before your king? Will you stand at attention before the captain of your salvation and wait for his instruction? Will you bow before your master and teacher? Will you run up to and embrace your good shepherd?

How will you react? What will you do in that moment?