

Radiance Bible Studies
Lesson Seven
“No One Ever”
The Declarative Character:
A Man For All Seasons

Song Lyrics

NO ONE EVER

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He became a man, but not just any man
A perfect man, beyond compare
As He lived His life, not just any life
A perfect life, beyond compare
He's a one of a kind, He's ahead of His time
He's the salt of the earth, He's the pearl of great price

No one ever lived the way this Man does
No one ever lived
No one ever lived
No one ever lived the way this Man does

He has something to say, but not just anything.
True words of life, beyond compare
Our daily bread, every word He said
Authority beyond compare
He's the voice of God, He's the Word become flesh
He's the light of the world, glorious radiance

No one ever spoke the way this Man does
No one ever spoke
No one ever spoke
No one ever spoke the way this Man does

He was filled with love, but not just any love.
A godly love, beyond compare
As showed His love, from the Father above
A holy love, beyond compare
He's the lamb, He's the door, He's the light and the way
He's the truth and the life and it's all we can say because

No one ever loved the way this Man does
No one ever loved

No one ever loved
No one ever loved the way this Man does

Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah He Is Lord
Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah He Is Lord

Texts: Books of Matthew, John

1. Someone has observed that contemporary society tends toward interest in personality rather than in character. Personality is much more obvious to the observer, but the character of the individual will inevitably be seen.
2. Surely of the two, character is of more importance than personality. This distinction applies to organizations, institutions and general human collectives of any kind. Advertisers, for instance, attempt to project the “personality” of the client organization, with perhaps few things said to draw attention to its character.
3. There is a rule here: The character of the person **is** the person. The character of the organization **is** the organization.
4. The scriptures used in this song and that become its backbone make reference to a certain kind of character. This kind of character we shall call **The Declarative Character**.
5. Jesus Christ was the definitive declarative character. The issue of character is of most immediate concern to all persons of gravity. In this, Jesus the Lord sets the standard. He is the standard, the pattern for human character.
6. It turns out that character is not judged against the context of situation nor of circumstance. Rather, character is judged against the reality of God and His Word.
7. Jesus the Son of God came into the human context. It is our context.
 - This is the context of **flesh**. It is here that we face needs, where we face physical pressure, where we face the specter of death and other things. We do this every day in a context through which Jesus Himself once passed.
 - This is the context of **mind**. We think, we emote, we take the measure of all things. The mind is where we live. It is who we are. The mind is the door and the key to so much.
 - This is the context of **circumstance**. Jesus entered the world at a certain time and with certain circumstances of an historical nature. He entered the world in the shape it was in at the time. Similarly, for us, circumstances “are what they are.”

8. But the glory of Jesus is that His character was not shaped by nor controlled by the human context. So here is the point: The human context -- whatever its circumstances and conditions -- were not declarative over the Lord's character. Rather His character was declarative over the human context into which He came.
9. The term declarative means to explain or to make known. There is a great difference between personality-- which is not declarative -- and character which is declarative. Either character rises above its context and is declarative over it, or the context becomes declarative over character and shapes our character.
10. The character of the Lord was not shaped by His environment. And because of Him, the character of each one of us can be set free from the human context. We can possess a character poured into an eternal likeness, an absolute mold.
11. Jesus represents a kind of character that does not give in to its own wants, will, nor desires. Nor does it surrender to its environment. The Cross is proof of that. *The declarative character, thus, is non-environmental.*
12. Jesus came to declare. That was His mission. He declared the Old Testament covenant fulfilled. He declared the inauguration of a new and better covenant. He declared all of revelation to be true. He declared the greater nature of God and indeed all invisible reality to ignorant men. He declared things about the manner of human life. He declared things about the place of human conduct. He declared things about the nature of temporal existence. All of His declarations were clothed with unique authority. Jesus established the highest benchmark for character ever set.
13. The phenomenon of the declarative character is important to all believers in Jesus Christ. In its essence a declarative character has the following effects:
 - All situations are understood in the light of that character rather than the declarative character being comprehended in the light of the circumstance.
 - Such a character leads. All leaders found in Scripture were of declarative character. Such leaders help others to see the situation in the light of the declarative character. True leadership is not a product of education, the social environment, nor of acquired skills such as conflict resolution skills: It is an error to believe that peace and harmony grow out of such social skills.
 - In a contest between an inventory of skills and declarative character, it is character that triumphs every time.
 - The declarative character does not allow the human context to function as declarative. Moses' leadership was based on this in the desert (Exodus

- 17). Elijah conducted himself along these lines at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). The apostles standing before the Sanhedrin spoke on these terms (Acts 4).
14. In the Book of Revelation chapter five Jesus is presented as finally declarative: What He declares over history will come to pass. What He declares for the lives of men will happen. He preserves whom He preserves. He declares destruction upon whom He declares destruction. Jesus holds the scepter. He shall not relinquish it to another.
15. In the Book of Acts chapter twelve Jesus declared the release of Peter from prison. In the same chapter He declared the death of King Herod.
16. In Mark 13:1-37 we are commanded to “watch!” by day and by night. This is so because the one who declares the destiny of man is coming with the clouds -- perhaps even today.
17. “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.’” (Revelation 3:7). Let every believer say: “Jesus is declarative.”
18. The wonder of it all is this that Jesus is willing to share His character with all who trust Him. We are invited to follow Him and we are invited to be like Him (Matthew 10:25). We are invited to partake of His character (Luke 6:39,40). We are invited to rise beyond the human context and be “like men sent from God” (2 Corinthians 2:17) That is to say that circumstances are understood in the light of such character, and not the other way around.
19. Such a human declarative character looks for, sees only, and wants only the revealed truth no matter the cost. This is Stephen in Acts 6:8-10. It is this kind of character that resists the power and the threats of godless men. This is Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael in Daniel chapter three. This character faces down and becomes declarative over that constant of human life, even death. That is Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Here is the character that tastes all the pain of earthly existence and rises to declarative heights over it all. This is the nameless Christian of James 5:13-18.
20. Jesus, in part, came to make us declarative over our circumstances and situations. This is how we shun temptation and combat personal sin and blunt the influences of the flesh and the world.
21. Every situation, circumstance, event or state of being should be seen in the light of such a declarative personality. Jesus Himself said: “You are the salt of the earth” and “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13,14). Such people are

declarative for only one reason. It is that they have turned to the Lord with all their “heart” and with all their “soul” and with all their “mind” (Matthew 22:37).

22. Traits of the Declarative Character:

- **It is not exhausted by the human context (Matthew 5:13).** Jesus’ followers are the “salt of the earth” only because they are like Him. And like Him, such people are not exhausted in the spiritual sense (the most important sense) by the sheer weight of life in the temporal order of things. The Lord walked among us and partook of all that is ours to experience in the world; yet His soul could not be overtaken by circumstance and events.
- **It knows that all things of true importance are spiritual (Matthew 13:45,46).** What distinguished the pearl merchant was his eye for the truly valuable, the truly important. Jesus not only had the same eye; He was Himself the “Pearl of Great Price.” He was not swayed by the ephemeral nor by the transient. The Lord was always aware of what was of most importance. His temptation in Matthew chapter four shows that. And the Lord sought what was of eternal importance in men. In Matthew 8:5-13 Jesus looked for and found what had the maximum value: great faith.
- **It stays rooted in the invisible and not the visible (Matthew 6:11).** Jesus teaches us to pray to “our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9) for our material needs. This means that the source of provision for our physical needs is the invisible, not the visible. Such a way of thinking is highly counter-intuitive. This puts the character of Jesus at odds with the usual standards of human wisdom. The declarative character has achieved an advanced understanding of what is now called *world process*. It recognizes that things are not as they appear to the five senses. It recognizes that things do not develop only as they appear to develop. It recognizes that world process is not the actual source of human life and human survival. The declarative character has come to understand that the visible realm is not, has not been, and never can be the real fountainhead of our well-being.
- **It extends a function of God into the world (John 1:14).** When Jesus came into the world or when “the Word became flesh,” it was for a purpose. One part of that purpose was to bring into the world, to extend into the human context the function of God. To that end Jesus preached the truth, set the captives free, had compassion on the suffering, rebuked the prideful, confronted the problem of sin and drove a wedge between light and darkness. The declarative character that Jesus is willing to build in each of us then also serves to extend the function of God into the world of men. Jesus was not a political activist, a social activist, an environmentalist nor a rebel. His was a character that originated in the

eternal world and was brought forward into this world. The agenda of the declarative character is nothing less than spiritual as explained in Scripture. His agenda was to look beyond this world and to teach others how to look beyond this world. The surprise in all of this is that looking beyond this world transforms character; and transformed character changes the world.

- **It is the vertex of human potential (John 8:12).** The vertex is the highest point of something. In this case the declarative character that starts with Jesus and that He shares with us is the vertex of human potential. If this is so, then one must reevaluate the entire meaning of human potential. Jesus declared Himself to be “the light of the world.” He furthermore declared that human darkness need not be the standard by which men live, think and behave. Light has eclipsed the darkness. In an interview two giants of science stated their opinions about human potential. E.O. Wilson and James Watson, two men of great scientific renown, stated that Jesus Christ was not the greatest man in history. That accolade, they said, goes to Charles Darwin. It was Darwin they believed who put it all together and who gave us the key to the understanding of human life. Therefore according to their assessment, the vertex of human potential is right on schedule with the scientific advancement of the human race. However, one must question that analysis since apparently we are still stuck as a race in the patterns of evolutionary survival of the fittest, at least by Wilson’s and Watson’s appraisal. Jesus came into the world to show the way. He came to bring light from outside the system. Many laughed, many doubted, some turned violent. But to those who saw and heard, the Lord opened the door to a light that changed everything. It was these people who derived from Jesus the power to embody the eternal light and then lifted men out of the limitations of a horizon bordered by the five senses.
- **It is unbreakable commitment (John 1:29-31).** From the days of Old Testament worship, the lamb was the sacrificial victim (Genesis 22:8; Exodus 12:21). It was the lamb offered up as propitiation for sin. Jesus came in that way into the human context. This required a clear grasp of purpose with all of the implications that came with it. It must have been the case that as Jesus grew into manhood and His death loomed ever closer, the Lord had to steel Himself against the fear and loathing of the cross. Manifest in the Lord was *unbreakable commitment* to His calling with all the suffering that went with it. The Lamb of God was not weak. Rather, He was strong in spirit and purpose -- and this to the degree that even death on the Cross could not turn Him back. The declarative character is in possession of itself.
- **It is truthful (John 10:1-9).** What Jesus did and said were authentic, truthful statements and actions. The Lord demonstrated no personal

agenda of His own. There was no deception in Him. This was not a man who attempted to manipulate others for the sake of His own dark personal motives. No darkness was ever found in Him. The Lord's words served to lead others to a higher range of openness to the heavenly Father. His voice became recognizable to His followers. This created a range of expectations in the minds of His sheep. They began to learn how He thought and just what was in His heart. Jesus was astute in all utterance and yet without guile. The Lord threw open a door to a new and better world. This was a world where only truth and justice and mercy governed. By His own words he not only opened the door, He **is** the door Himself (John 10:7). So, the question now is this: *On which side of the door do you stand?*

- **It is exclusionary (John 14:1-14).** Jesus was not a partisan player in political correctness. He did not present Himself in terms calculated to win the greatest number of votes. In the context of John chapter fourteen, Jesus drew very narrow lines by which men can find their way. He was the embodiment of these narrow lines. The Lord represented the eternal world with all of its authority over human existence. As an old missionary once said: "Jesus was imperialistic." He came to conquer all – one way or the other. The Savior's statements: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" serve to herald His exclusionary status. Beside Him, all philosophy, life theories and world systems are as nothing. Jesus made those statements when He was here with us. And now from His eternal and invisible throne the Lord enforces them. We have not come to a kingdom of men and their ways but "to Mount Zion", "to the heavenly Jerusalem", to "the city of the living God" (Hebrews 12:22). We have "come to God the judge of all men" and "to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant" (Hebrews 12:23,24).

Well did the writer say and rightly so! "See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks" (Hebrews 12:25).

Discussion Questions

- 1) Give examples from contemporary politics, advertising, media or other cultural arenas where personality is portrayed as being of more importance than character.
- 2) What are the three contexts listed in the lesson? Explain each. What is the relationship of character to each of these?
3. In what way is it true that character is declarative? What aspects of the life of Jesus showed that His declarative character was "non-environmental?"
4. In the book of Revelation, what actions and words of Jesus show Him to be a declarative person?

5. Explain how it is that we can partake of the character of Jesus.
6. “A human declarative character looks for, sees only, and wants only the revealed truth no matter the cost.” How is this demonstrated by Stephen in Acts 6:8-10? By Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael in Daniel chapter three? By Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18? By the nameless Christian of James 5:13-18?
7. Demonstrate how the life of Jesus shows that a declarative character is not exhausted by the human context.
8. Demonstrate how the life of Jesus shows that a declarative character knows that all things of true importance are spiritual.
9. Demonstrate how the life of Jesus shows that a declarative character stays rooted in the invisible and not the visible.
10. Demonstrate how the life of Jesus shows that a declarative character extends a function of God into the world.
11. Demonstrate how the life of Jesus shows that a declarative character is the vertex of human potential.
12. Demonstrate how the life of Jesus shows that a declarative character is unbreakable commitment.
13. Demonstrate how the life of Jesus shows that a declarative character is truthful.
14. Demonstrate how the life of Jesus shows that a declarative character is exclusionary.

**For further reflection:
“The Second Singing”**

Now that you’ve studied in depth some of the implications of the passages under consideration, what do you understand and think as you hear the song again?