



*the SAYINGS
and TEACHINGS
of JESUS*

the RED letters

edited by
TIMOTHY J. BEALS



The Red Letters

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Preface: The Word

WORDS ARE IMPORTANT. They can express reality and shape it. So when the writer of the fourth Gospel account articulated the essential nature of the central figure in history, he said:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:1–5).

The apostle John could have used other metaphors, but none more clear, elegant, powerful, or true as “the Word.” Jesus himself acknowledged the mysterious power of words in the account of the Roman soldier who shared with the Lord his concern for his servant’s health. The centurion declared to Jesus, “Only say the word, and my servant will be healed” (Matthew 8:8). And Jesus “marveled” (8:10), literally was “amazed” or “astonished,” at this claim—the only time in his earthly ministry he was “surprised” by the faith and understanding of one of his

followers. Words make worlds. They have mysterious and undeniable power to share and shape our thinking.

But there is another thing about words: they have their limits. Because of the constraints of space and time, we are often forced to be selective, saying only the most important things (most of the time). That's what makes this volume unique. Here we focus on one thing: the words from the Word. By looking only at the “red letters,” Jesus' spoken words, we see what is important to him.

The Gospels are not comprehensive. John acknowledges that “there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (21:25). So Jesus chose his words carefully. Sometimes he said nothing at all (Mark 14:61). When he spoke, his message was purposeful and poignant, measured and directed for an audience both present in history and extended through all time. Always he said what was true, and everywhere we hear him giving his listeners their proper place in his life.

The following presentation is meant to encourage readers to hear and understand Jesus' message in two ways:

- through a narrated, chronological life of Christ in his own words—the sayings of Jesus (in Part 1)
- through a thematic presentation of Jesus' message—the teachings of Jesus (in Part 2)

The Origin of the Red Letters

Like chapter and verse numbers, center-column references, and many other features we take for granted in our modern English Bibles, the red-letters idea is a recent innovation. Its creator, Louis Klopsch (1852–1910), was born in Germany but moved to New York at age two and grew up there. By age twenty he had begun a career in journalism followed by a lifetime of service as both a printer and publisher. In 1890 he became the American editor of the British weekly *The Christian Herald*, a newspaper that remained in print for over 130 years.

On June 19, 1899, while writing an editorial for the newspaper, Klopsch noticed these words from Luke 22:20: “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” Impressed by the symbolism of blood, Klopsch asked a trusted publishing colleague if Christ’s words could be printed in red. His mentor replied, “It could do no harm, and it most certainly could do much good.”

An initial red-letter edition of sixty thousand King James Version New Testaments soon sold out. Praise streamed in—from the King of Sweden (by telegram) to President Theodore Roosevelt (through a dinner invitation that Louis Klopsch accepted). Throughout the twentieth century, red-letter editions became standard in nearly all traditional and modern translations. While other trends in Bible publishing have come and gone, the red-letter option

appears to be a fixed feature, welcomed and demanded by many Bible readers the world over.

The Approach to This Edition

A word about my methods and criteria. In the pages that follow, I have compiled every instance of Jesus' recorded message in the Gospels from the English Standard Version. In an effort to reduce repetition, however, where two or more Gospel accounts refer to the same teaching or event, I have selected only one—usually the fullest and most detailed account.

In Part 1 you will find a complete account of Jesus' life using only his words, including every remark of his earthly ministry recorded across all four Gospels. In this section I have focused on Jesus' half of the dialogue with his followers and opponents. For the order of events, I have followed J. Dwight Pentecost's outline in *A Harmony of the Words and Works of Jesus Christ*.

In Part 2 you will discover every teaching of our Lord touching on the crucial issues of his day and our own. In many instances the accounts you read here are also rendered in similar accounts in one or more Gospels. Throughout the book, the commentary and apparatus has been kept to a minimum to allow the power and compassion of Jesus' sometimes comforting, sometimes unsettling message to remain the focus.

My primary incentive is to provide a unique volume

Preface

that will enable us to become better apprentices of the Master by allowing us to hear directly from him about what matters most. So we can be transformed by the words and share the thrill of the apostle who wrote, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

My hope is that the red letters become the read letters.

Traveling and Teaching

(To the servants)

Fill the jars with water.

JOHN 2:7

Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.

JOHN 2:8

(To those selling the pigeons)

Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.

JOHN 2:16

(To the Jews)

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

JOHN 2:19

(To Nicodemus)

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

JOHN 3:3

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born

again.” The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

JOHN 3:5-8

Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

JOHN 3:10-21

Traveling and Teaching

(To the woman of Samaria)

Give me a drink.

JOHN 4:7

If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink,” you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

JOHN 4:10

Go, call your husband, and come here.

JOHN 4:16

You are right in saying, “I have no husband”; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.

JOHN 4:17-18

I who speak to you am he.

JOHN 4:26

(To his disciples in Samaria)

I have food to eat that you do not know about.

JOHN 4:32

My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, “There are yet four months, then comes the harvest”? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here

the Sayings

the saying holds true, “One sows and another reaps.” I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.

JOHN 4:34-38

(To the royal official whose son was ill)

Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.

JOHN 4:48

Go; your son will live.

JOHN 4:50

(To Simon)

Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

LUKE 5:4

Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.

LUKE 5:10

(To a demon)

Be silent, and come out of him!

MARK 1:25

(To the crowd)

I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.

LUKE 4:43

Traveling and Teaching

(To a leper)

Be clean.

MATTHEW 8:3

See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them.

MATTHEW 8:4

(To the paralytic brought on the bed)

Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.

MATTHEW 9:2

(In response to the scribes' thoughts that he had spoken blasphemy)

Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Rise and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins—he then said to the paralytic—**Rise, pick up your bed and go home.**

MATTHEW 9:4-6

(The calling of Matthew)

Follow me.

MATTHEW 9:9

the Sayings

(In response to the Pharisees who questioned his disciples about why he ate with tax collectors and sinners)

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.” For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

MATTHEW 9:12-13

(In response to the Pharisees' question about why his disciples do not fast)

Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.

MATTHEW 9:15-17

(To a sick man)

Do you want to be healed?

JOHN 5:6

Get up, take up your bed, and walk.

JOHN 5:8

See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.

JOHN 5:14

Traveling and Teaching

(To the Jews)

My Father is working until now, and I am working.

JOHN 5:17

(To the Pharisees)

Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.

MATTHEW 12:3-8

(To the Pharisees regarding healing on the Sabbath)

Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

MATTHEW 12:11-12

(Upon hearing that the centurion's servant was paralyzed)

I will come and heal him.

MATTHEW 8:7

the Sayings

(Upon the centurion's saying that if Jesus would just say the words, it would be enough)

Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

MATTHEW 8:10-12

(To the centurion)

Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.

MATTHEW 8:13

(To the widow of Nain)

Do not weep.

LUKE 7:13

(To the widow's dead son)

Young man, I say to you, arise.

LUKE 7:14

(To the disciples)

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

MATTHEW 9:37-38

Training the Twelve

(To the twelve apostles)

Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. Acquire no gold nor silver nor copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics nor sandals nor a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake.

But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and

follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

MATTHEW 10:5-42

(To the disciples of John the Baptist)

Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.

MATTHEW 11:4-6

(To the crowds about John the Baptist)

What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written,

*“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.”*

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their play-mates,

*“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.”*

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, “Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.

MATTHEW 11:7-19

(To the unrepentant cities)

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in

Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.

MATTHEW 11:21-24

I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all 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 11:25-30

(To Simon the Pharisee)

Simon, I have something to say to you.

LUKE 7:40

A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?

LUKE 7:41-42

You have judged rightly.

LUKE 7:43

the Sayings

Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.

LUKE 7:44-47

(To the woman who washed his feet)

Your sins are forgiven.

LUKE 7:48

Your faith has saved you; go in peace.

LUKE 7:50

(Of his mother and brothers)

Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?

MATTHEW 12:48

Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

MATTHEW 12:49-50

(To the disciples who were afraid of the storm)

Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?

MARK 4:40

Training the Twelve

(To the woman with the issue of blood)

Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.

MARK 5:34

(Of the official's daughter)

Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping.

LUKE 8:52

(In response to two blind men who called out to him for mercy)

Do you believe that I am able to do this?

MATTHEW 9:28

According to your faith be it done to you.

MATTHEW 9:29

See that no one knows about it.

MATTHEW 9:30

(To the people at the synagogue in his hometown, Nazareth)

A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.

MARK 6:4

(In regard to the five thousand needing to be fed)

They need not go away; you give them something to eat.

MATTHEW 14:16

Bring them here to me.

MATTHEW 14:18

(To the disciples while walking on water)

Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.

MATTHEW 14:27

(To Peter)

Come.

MATTHEW 14:29

O you of little faith, why did you doubt?

MATTHEW 14:31

(To a Canaanite woman about her demon-oppressed daughter)

I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

MATTHEW 15:24

Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

MARK 7:27

O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.

MATTHEW 15:28

Training the Twelve

(In regard to the four thousand needing to be fed)

I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away.

MARK 8:2-3

(To the Pharisees and Sadducees)

When it is evening, you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red." And in the morning, "It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening." You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.

MATTHEW 16:2-4

(To the disciples)

Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

MATTHEW 16:6

O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

MATTHEW 16:8-11

(To the disciples)

Who do the crowds say that I am?

LUKE 9:18

But who do you say that I am?

LUKE 9:20

(To Peter)

Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

MATTHEW 16:17-19

(To Peter, on another occasion)

Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

MATTHEW 16:23

(To Peter, James, and John at the time of the Transfiguration)

Rise, and have no fear.

MATTHEW 17:7

Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

MATTHEW 17:9

Training the Twelve

Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.

MATTHEW 17:11-12

(To the disciples and crowd about a demon-possessed boy)

O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.

LUKE 9:41

(To the disciples who asked why they could not cast out the demon)

Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.

MATTHEW 17:20-21

(To the disciples)

The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.

MARK 9:31

(To Peter)

What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?

MATTHEW 17:25

the Sayings

Then the sons are free. However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.

MATTHEW 17:26-27

(In response to a scribe who said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go")

Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

MATTHEW 8:20

(In response to the disciple who wanted to bury his father before following Jesus)

Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.

LUKE 9:60

“This splendid little book will build up your faith and direct you to its source in Jesus as both Lord and Savior.”

Quentin J. Schultze, *DeKruyter Chair in Faith and Communication, Calvin College*

“Like looking at a masterpiece with a magnifying glass, Beals takes those interested in the life of Christ ‘up close and personal.’ Jesus speaks of himself as he has always done . . . with breathtaking clarity.”

Steven W. Haas, *Vice President, World Vision*

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