

For the

# LIFE of the WORLD

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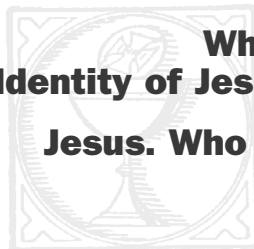


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The Identity of Jesus in the New Testament**  
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In contrast to the befuddled understanding of Jesus’ identity often presented by modern media, the New Testament presents a clear and uncompromising confession of Jesus as God incarnate for the salvation of the world.

**7 Jesus. Who is this Jesus? Jesus is...**  
By the Rev. Randall L. Golter, President, Rocky Mountain District, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)  
Jesus, the Christ, true God and true man, the only-begotten Son of the Father, is the source of all spirituality. His blood erases and guarantees our sin-debt (Heb. 10:12-14), draws us near to God (Eph. 2:13), and brings holiness to the unholy (1 John 1:7b; John 17:17).

**10 Everybody Loves Jesus.  
The Culture Cherishes a Counterfeit Christ**  
By the Rev. Todd A. Wilken, St. Louis, Missouri, is the host of the nationally syndicated radio program, *Issues, Etc.*  
Why does Jesus make the cover of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and even *Popular Mechanics*? Why is He the subject of best-selling fiction and blockbuster movies? ... Everybody claims to know who Jesus was and what He would do. Everybody loves Jesus.

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Rev. Scott Klemsz

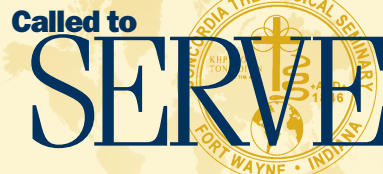
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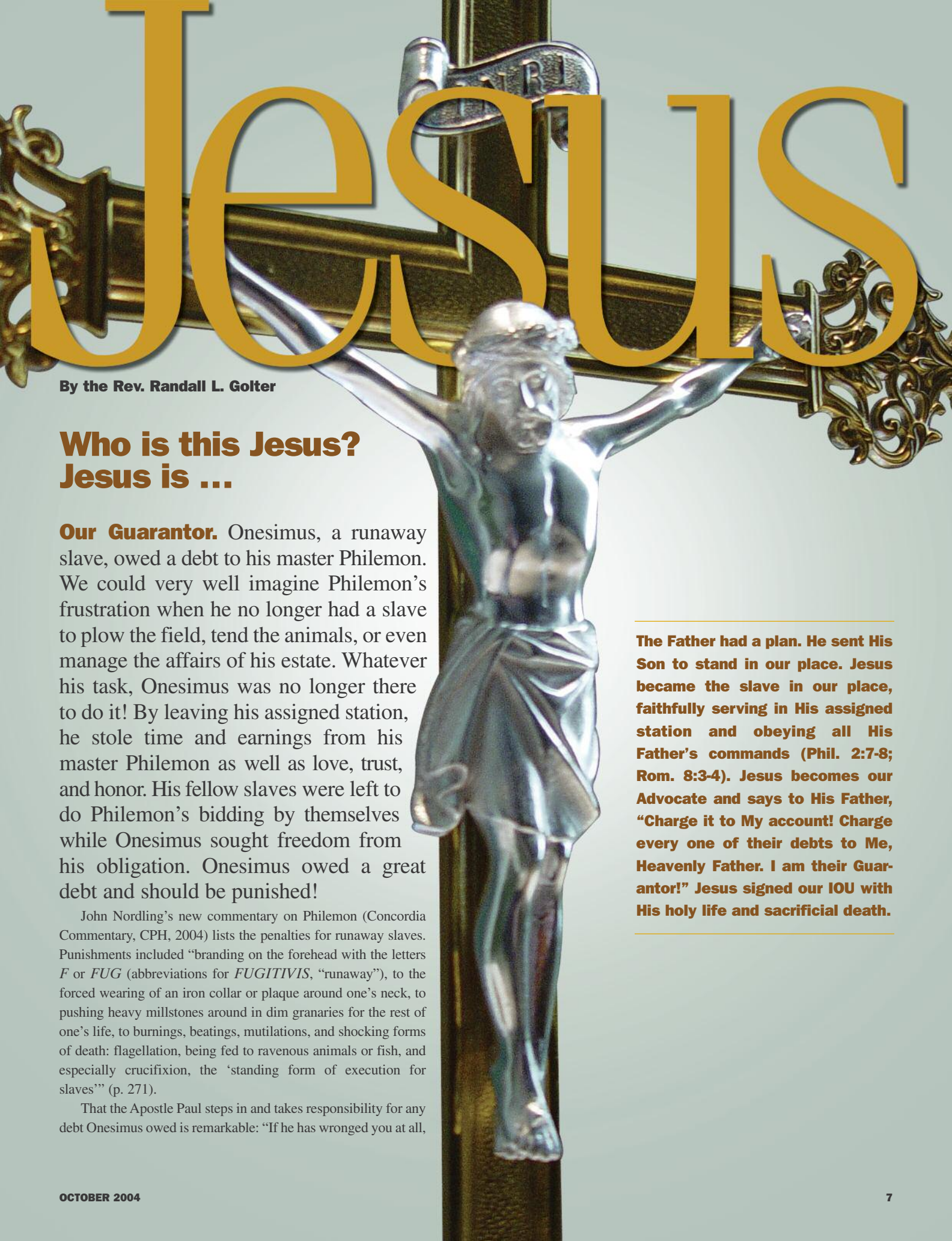
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By the Rev. Randall L. Golter

## Who is this Jesus? Jesus is ...

**Our Guarantor.** Onesimus, a runaway slave, owed a debt to his master Philemon. We could very well imagine Philemon's frustration when he no longer had a slave to plow the field, tend the animals, or even manage the affairs of his estate. Whatever his task, Onesimus was no longer there to do it! By leaving his assigned station, he stole time and earnings from his master Philemon as well as love, trust, and honor. His fellow slaves were left to do Philemon's bidding by themselves while Onesimus sought freedom from his obligation. Onesimus owed a great debt and should be punished!

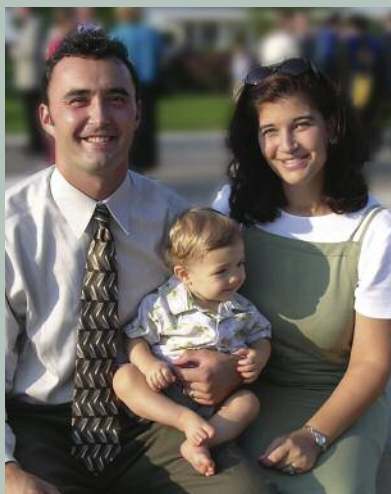
John Nordling's new commentary on Philemon (Concordia Commentary, CPH, 2004) lists the penalties for runaway slaves. Punishments included "branding on the forehead with the letters *F* or *FUG* (abbreviations for *FUGITIVIS*, "runaway"), to the forced wearing of an iron collar or plaque around one's neck, to pushing heavy millstones around in dim granaries for the rest of one's life, to burnings, beatings, mutilations, and shocking forms of death: flagellation, being fed to ravenous animals or fish, and especially crucifixion, the 'standing form of execution for slaves'" (p. 271).

That the Apostle Paul steps in and takes responsibility for any debt Onesimus owed is remarkable: "If he has wronged you at all,

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**The Father had a plan. He sent His Son to stand in our place. Jesus became the slave in our place, faithfully serving in His assigned station and obeying all His Father's commands (Phil. 2:7-8; Rom. 8:3-4). Jesus becomes our Advocate and says to His Father, "Charge it to My account! Charge every one of their debts to Me, Heavenly Father. I am their Guarantor!" Jesus signed our IOU with His holy life and sacrificial death.**

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**God's only Son Jesus, along with His Father and the Spirit, is our holiness. God preached to the Israelites, "I am the LORD who sanctifies you" (Lev. 20:8). Because of the Old Adam the Israelites could not generate their own holiness any more than we can today. They, therefore, had to be in constant contact with the Holy One Himself. Neither the Old nor the New Testament has any record of a self-sanctifying scheme that succeeded!**

or owes you anything, charge that to my account" (v. 18). Paul would guarantee any debts from his own purse; he would be the guarantor of Onesimus! In effect Paul was saying, "Charge every debt to me, Philemon! I'll take care of it on behalf of Onesimus."

In America the average credit-card debt is seven thousand dollars. The vast majority of Americans have a monthly mortgage payment. We all know about debt! How much more debt we owe our Heavenly Father! Carefully mull over God's Ten Commandments, and we quickly become aware of our "running away" from His demands of love toward Him and His creation. We have stolen respect, love, and honor from God as well as concern from those entrusted to our care.

Our first response is to mouth words of defense or excuse, but all words fail. The Father had another plan. He sent His Son to stand in our place. Jesus became the slave in our place, faithfully serving in His assigned station and obeying all His Father's commands (Phil. 2:7-8; Rom. 8:3-4). Jesus becomes our Advocate and says to His Father, "Charge it to My account! Charge every one of their debts to Me, Heavenly Father. I am their Guarantor!" Jesus signed our IOU with His holy life and sacrificial death.

Standing in the Lord's presence each week, His called servant announces freedom from all debt to God: "I ... forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The taste of freedom in the Holy Meal as the Lord's blood of redemption touches sin-parched lips causes great gladness and unrestrained joy. The baptized "go out leaping like calves from the stall" (Malachi 4:2).

We owe no debt to God, but we do owe a debt to our neighbor. Therefore, Jesus leads us beyond the Divine Service to show

us an obligation to those whose paths cross ours. The debt we owe gives us the privilege of becoming a slave of love to others (Rom. 12:1; James 1:27; 1 Peter 1:22; Luke 10:33-35). What freedom! What a life we now have in Him!

Who is Jesus? He is our **Guarantor**.

## **Jesus. Who is this Jesus? He is ...**

**Our Holiness.** Most everyone is looking for some way to become holier. The harder we try, the filthier we get. Only God is holy, and His Son is our holiness. Paul writes that Jesus is our "sanctification" (1 Cor. 1:30), saying that Jesus, the God/man, is our holiness.

I spent a few days in early September on the Navajo Indian Reservation just north of Gallup, New Mexico. The missionary, Steve Greene, told me about the tremendous amount of alcohol abuse and family dysfunction on the reservation. Many Navajos seek the "gospel solutions" of medicine men for cleansing of the evil they feel.

Mental health counselors speak of the "replacement-child syndrome" for those women who suffer grief from the abortion they had. Many years ago I knew of a woman who refused to come to the Lord's Holy Table because she had been violated by her father. She felt she was too unholy for the Lord; she ended up seeking her cleansing solution by joining the Mormon religion. She was taught that if she would just strive as hard as Jesus did, she could become as holy as Jesus.

As one reads the Old Testament prophets, he learns that the Israelites of old were no different. They mimicked their pagan neighbors' pursuit of holiness by contacting the dead, sacrificing to goat demons, and sacrificing their children to Molech (Lev. 17:7; 20:4, 6). The Israelites were seeking holiness in all the wrong places.



At least the Israelites got it right when they understood that holiness must come from outside of them. Nothing is holy within any person as Paul establishes (Rom. 3:10; 5:12; 7:18).

God's only Son Jesus, along

with His Father and the Spirit, is our holiness. God preached to the Israelites, "I am the LORD who sanctifies you" (Lev. 20:8). Because of the Old Adam the Israelites could not generate their own holiness any more than we can today. They, therefore, had to be in constant contact with the Holy One Himself. Neither the Old nor the New Testament has any record of a self-sanctifying scheme that succeeded!

The Israelites received holiness through the Lord's prescribed way of sharing His holiness through the divine-to-man ritual interaction of His Word, sacrifices, and meals. The Lord was the actor who offered atonement by these Word-initiated and Word-empowered ways (Lev. 1:1; 4:1; 5:14; 17:11). The Israelites lost holiness because they lost contact with the Lord's way of sharing His holiness.

Jesus is the Father's divine-to-man interaction: He is the Father's way to communicate holiness to His people in the Divine Service. Jesus is the Word that sanctifies (John 1:1, 14; 17:17, 19), the Sacrifice that sanctifies (Heb. 10:10, 14),

and the Meal that sanctifies (Matt. 26:26-29; 1 John 1:7b). Through the Word and the Sacraments the ever-present Jesus brings His Church into being and keeps His Church holy. Holiness is lost unless Jesus is in contact with us.

John Kleinig writes in his Leviticus commentary (Concordia Commentary, CPH, p. 440): "Like God who had declared to the Israelites in Lev. 20:8, 'I am the Lord who makes you holy,' he sanctifies all the members of the church by his embodied presence with them in the Divine Service and his ministry as their exalted High Priest (Heb. 2:11). He sanctifies them through his holy body and blood (Heb. 10:10, 14, 29; 13:12). He therefore is their sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). In him and through their faith in him, they are sanctified (Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 1:2). They are holy in him (Phil. 1:10)."

**Who is Jesus? He is our Holiness.**

Buddhist priests to this day climb Mount Omine, a 5,640-foot mountain in Japan. They are drawn by a belief that the two-hour ascent up its rocky trails will help them find a higher level of spirituality and will separate them from the worldly concerns below. They will never find what they seek. They have the wrong place, the wrong mountain, the wrong god.

Jesus, the Christ, true God and true man, the only-begotten Son of the Father, is the source of all spirituality. His blood erases and guarantees our sin-debt (Heb. 10:12-14), draws us near to God (Eph. 2:13), and brings holiness to the unholy (1 John 1:7b; John 17:17).

*The Rev. Randall L. Golter is the President of the LCMS Rocky Mountain District.*

