

GOD IN SHARPEST FOCUS: Jesus the God-revealer makes the Father known

Magnifying

Ever tried that trick of burning paper using a magnifying glass? One summer at school that was all the rage—around the yard there were groups of boys huddling round as they concentrated the sun’s rays to a point of intense heat and light, charring a black circle and sending up a haze of blue-grey smoke.

Then in the physics class we used those same convex lenses to examine the behaviour of light, drawing complex ray diagrams that would converge at that central focus point.

The focus is the single point at which all the beams of light meet, an intensity of brilliance of light intersected and combined. If you really want to see and understand God, then see Him in sharpest focus: Jesus Christ.

Revealing the Father

For without him we only see a vague and distorted picture of God, modified and modulated through the experience of others. For even the greatest of the prophets and the most spiritual Bible writer only catches a faint glimmer of the truth expressed in Jesus himself. As Jesus so clearly stated: “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No-one knows the Son except the Father, and no-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Matthew 11:27 NIV).

Jesus himself identified this as his mission—for there was no other way in which God could reveal Himself as He truly is without coming Himself. The revelation of God to humanity is not in the actual form of Jesus—what he looked like, etc.—but in the his actions, the way he lived, the evidence of his teachings and miracles, and most of all the clearest revelation of all—in Gethsemane and on the cross.

Deepest relationship

In his dramatic and moving prayer before his betrayal, Jesus makes all this clear. “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3 NIV, see also vv.8,18,21,23). Knowing God is through Christ, and this is the only way of entering eternal life. This is not some “special knowledge,” some secret information, it is knowing in the Biblical sense of the deepest and most intimate relationship.

As Jesus goes on speaking to his Father, this revealing demonstration of God is at the heart of Jesus’ mission and message: “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world....Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.” (John 17:6 NIV). Jesus points to his Father as the source of all he is, and his assignment has been achieved—to reveal God to those who would stop long enough to see. And again, this “revealing knowing” of God is not some mental assent or intellectual information, but rather the deepest relationship which is to lead to the same kind of love the Father has for the Son! More even than this—that Jesus himself may “be in them”:

“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you

have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” (John 17:25,26 NIV).

Knowing God as Friend

All through his ministry this is the essential truth Jesus is trying to convey:

John 8:19 NIV: “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”

John 8:54,55 NIV: “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him.”

John 10:15 NIV: “...just as the Father knows me and I know the Father...”

John 12:44,45 NIV: “When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.”

John 14:7,9 NIV: “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him....Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

John 15:15 NIV: “Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

Jesus—the Life

Not only through the words he used, the parables he spoke, the descriptions he gave. Jesus’ ministry of healing spoke eloquent volumes of the God he came to make manifest. Every blind man that saw, every crippled that leapt for joy, every leper made clean, new and whole spoke of the God who heals, remaking sinful human beings in His image once more.

His very life became the vehicle of God’s self-expression—from birth through the temptations to the cross itself. As Jesus so clearly emphasized:

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” John 3:14 NIV.

“When you have lifted up the Son of Man then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.” John 8:28 NIV.

“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” John 12:32 NIV.

And as this last text goes on to say, “He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.” (John 12:33 NIV). Not just a crucifixion, not just a public spectacle, but a revelation of the character of God that would draw all to Him.

Which is why John could say, writing with hindsight and under inspiration: “No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” (John 1:18 NIV).

God's only way

No other way was possible. Only through this incredible spectacle of the Son of Man, Son of God “publicly dying” could humanity be won back to loving admiration and total trust of the God so long misrepresented and maligned. Jesus is the one who bears witness to the truth (see Is. 55:4; Jn. 3:11,32; 8:14; 18:37; 1 Tim. 6:13; Rev. 1:5); and the most essential truth is the truth about God that we had to see.

“Christ came to represent the Father. We behold in him the image of the invisible God. He clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to the world that the erroneous ideas Satan had been the means of creating in the minds of men, in regard to the character of God, might be removed... Christ came in the robe of the flesh...that lost man might communicate with him and live... Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes... When the object of his mission was attained—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men.” Ellen White, Signs of the Times, January 20, 1890, (My emphasis).

The image of the invisible

And once this was established, and humanity had gained sight of the truth of God, then this was the message of good news preached by the apostles that turned the world upside-down:

- 1 John 4:9 “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.”
- Hebrews 1:3 NIV: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being...”
- Colossians 1:15 NIV: “He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God...”
- 2 Corinthians 4:4,6 NIV: “...the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God...For God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”
- Ephesians 1:9 NIV: “And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ...” (Col. 1:26).
- Romans 1:19 NIV: “What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.”
- Colossians 1:27 NIV: “God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Revealed mystery

The mystery of God is now a revealed mystery, and as a result, then “We... are being transformed into his likeness.” (2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV).

God is now in sharpest focus. Jesus in the glorious brilliance of his life brought the absolute truth about God into its clearest convergence, like rays of light spotlighting the vital, essential gospel: the GOOD NEWS OF GOD!

What do you see?

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