

## 2. The Mystery of His Deity (2Q 2008—The Wonder of Jesus)

**Biblical material:** Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 16:13-17; John 1:1, 14, 18; 8:58; 17:5; 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:14.

### Quotes

- Why don't the names of Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius offend people? The reason is that these others didn't claim to be God, but Jesus did. *Josh McDowell*
- Jesus is the God whom we can approach without pride and before whom we can humble ourselves without despair. *Blaise Pascal*
- The day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus by the Supreme Being in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter. *Thomas Jefferson*
- Was the real Jesus of history one and the same as the Christ of faith whom we read about in the New Testament and worship in the church? Was Jesus really raised from the dead? Is he really the divine Lord of lords? *John Clayton*

### Questions

Why is Jesus' divinity such a contentious issue? How do we explain this belief without seeming to be arbitrary in our decision? What is the best evidence? On what basis did Peter make up his mind? How do we understand Jesus' statement that if we have seen him we have seen the Father?

### Discussion/ Comment

"If I make glorious claims about myself, that's nothing," Jesus agreed. "But it is God himself who endorses me, the one you claim, 'He is our God.' You don't know him, but I know him. If I were to say, 'I don't know him,' I would be a liar, just like you. But I do know him, and trust his word. Your father Abraham looked forward to see my time, and was delighted when he saw it." "You're not even fifty, and you've seen Abraham," they scoffed. "In absolute truth I'm telling you that before Abraham ever existed, I have always been." They picked up stones to kill him, but Jesus was hidden from their sight and he left the Temple. John 8:54-59 FBV.

Jesus is absolutely clear about his pre-existence and divinity. So many times in John's gospel he identifies himself as the one who came—from above, from the one who sent him etc. Additionally there are the numerous "I am" statements that reveal his identification with God, and were understood that way by his hearers. But as Jesus states, anybody can make claims. So what's the evidence?

The lesson references John 20 and Thomas experience, which concludes with his declaration of faith: "My Lord, and my God!" Jesus had invited Thomas to make a physical investigation. This was undoubted proof of Jesus' physical body and of the results of the crucifixion. When Jesus responds as he does regarding those who will believe in the future, he is not negating the need to investigate. In fact, as he tells Nathaniel, declarations of Jesus' divinity are not sufficient—they must be based on

experience and demonstration. That is why Jesus says much about his mission, but does not simply make claims about himself. He prefers to ask the question, and then allow others to make up their own minds.

What of Peter's response to Jesus' question in Matthew 16? Jesus indicates this came from revelation. Yet Peter had also been observing all that Jesus said and did. While insight surely comes from God, we surely do not ignore the evidence of our eyes and ears. In fact Jesus urged his companions to do just that!

John 14:9 is surely most significant. To say that in seeing Jesus we have seen the Father is a statement that needs to be better understood. It is not simply in a representative way of seeing. Jesus is here saying that you see in me, and by my presence with you, the eternal God in both being and action. That is why all the material in the gospel accounts is so important—for it reveals how God wishes to relate to us. Nor is it simply a case of saying, "It's me!" God wants us to relate to him because of his nature and character, not just because of his power and position. That is what we need to see when we see Jesus, for most of all Jesus demonstrates the character of God in the clearest possible way. This is the evidence: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life." 1 John 1:1 NIV.

### **Ellen White Comments**

[On John 14:9] He wished Christ to reveal the Father in bodily form; but in Christ God had already revealed Himself. Is it possible, Christ said, that after walking with Me, hearing My words, seeing the miracle of feeding the five thousand, of healing the sick of the dread disease leprosy, of bringing the dead to life, of raising Lazarus, who was a prey to death, whose body had indeed seen corruption, you do not know Me? Is it possible that you do not discern the Father in the works that He does by Me? . . . God cannot be seen in external form by any human being. Christ alone can represent the Father to humanity. {CC 320}

Taking humanity upon Him, Christ came to be one with humanity, and at the same time to reveal our heavenly Father to sinful human beings. He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, He who was the express image of the invisible God, was alone able to reveal the character of the Deity to mankind. {MH 423}

But when Jesus is seen upon the cross, as the gift of God because He loved man, the eyes are opened to see things in a new light. God as revealed in Christ is not a severe judge, an avenging tyrant, but a merciful and loving Father. {1SM 183.2}

As we see Jesus dying upon the cross to save lost man, the heart echoes the words of John, "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" (1 John 3:1). There is nothing that more decidedly distinguishes the Christian from the worldly man than the estimate he has of God. {1SM 183-4}

The glory of the Father was revealed in the Son; Christ made manifest the character of the Father. He was so perfectly connected with God, so completely embraced in His encircling light, that he who had seen the Son, had seen the Father. His voice was as the voice of God (RH Jan. 7, 1890). {5BC 1142}

