

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus Is God

Scripture: John 14:7-14

Code: P19

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The strategic importance of those final hours in the upper room with the eleven disciples cannot be overstated. All Jesus' instructions to them that night, His warnings, His teaching, His commandments, His promises and His revelation, were calculated to build them up and brace them for the trauma they were about to experience. It was essential that Jesus prepare them for the shock of His death. The news of His leaving was a tremendous blow to them, and their hearts were already deeply troubled. They had put all their faith in Him, and they loved Him more than life itself. Their faith might have been seriously damaged if they had seen Him die without hearing what He had to say in those few remaining hours.

The disciples had been witnesses to some amazing events in the three brief years of Jesus' ministry. He had cast out demons, healed people with every conceivable sickness, and even raised people from the dead. He had demonstrated His power over every adversary, and in every situation where it seemed He was threatened, He had come forth the victor. He had successfully countered every argument, answered every question, resisted every temptation, and confounded every enemy. But now He was predicting His own death at the hands of wicked men.

The confused disciples did not understand how Messiah could become a victim of the people. It didn't fit their concept of what His mission would be. Not only that, but they had also become increasingly aware that Jesus was the incarnation of God. They thought of Him as invincible, omniscient, and devoid of any kind of weakness. Now they were understandably confused. Why would He die? How could He die? Who could defeat Him? How could anyone else ever accept Him as Messiah if He died? Did this mean that all they lived for the past three years was in vain? And most crucial of all, did it mean that Jesus was not who they thought?

Jesus, sensing the nagging questions of their troubled hearts, continued His ministry of comfort to them by reaffirming His deity:

"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."

Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will he do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." (John 14:7-14)

The implications of Jesus' words in those few verses are overwhelming. The fact that He claims to be God is profound enough. But then He adds a guarantee that whoever believes in Him would have power to do even greater works than He had done, and concludes by saying that if we ask anything in His name He will do it. These words are monumental in declaring not only who Jesus is, but also what He intends to do in and for those who belong to Him.

Notice that our Lord was making three momentous revelations to His disciples.

The Revelation of His Person

The first of these was the revelation of His person. Only a few days before, when Jesus had entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey to shouts of "Hosanna," there was no question in the disciples' minds about who He was. Now they weren't sure. In their hearts they were asking questions about Him that had been answered before, so Jesus reiterated to them who He really was, by revealing His person to them in fresh and unmistakably terminology: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (v. 9). "I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me" (v. 10).

What did He reveal to them about Himself? One thing: that He is God. They had heard His claims of deity before, and they had witnessed the proof of it in His works. He had said in verse 6 that He was the way to God, the truth about God, in the very life of God. He goes a step further in verses 7-10, and says in unequivocal terms that He is God. His words must have been staggering, because the claim is so tremendous.

Yet it cannot be dismissed. The single, central, most important issue of all about Jesus is the question of His deity. Everyone who studies about Jesus must confront the issue, because of His own claims to be God. Some conclude that Jesus was a madman, who had delusions of grandeur. Others believe He was a fraud. Still others try to say that He was only a good teacher, but that is not really an option, because good teachers don't claim to be God. Either He was God in the flesh, or He was a madman

or a fraud.

Sabellius, a second-century heretic, the forerunner of the Unitarians, taught that Jesus was only a radiation, a manifestation of God. But He is not a manifestation of God; He is God manifest. There is a significant difference. Jesus is uniquely one with, but distinct from, the Father--God manifest in human flesh.

Here Jesus makes the very simple, undisguised claim that He is no less than God. He had told them many times in the past that He proceeded from the Father. His comment in verse 4 implies that they should have understood: "You know the way where I am going." They should have at least known that He was going to be with the Father. But Jesus' words left them scratching their heads, and Thomas asked for an explanation. Jesus' answer was simply, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." (v. 6).

It was a claim of divine authority. In other words, "If you know Me, you know the way to get where I'm going. I'm going to the Father and I will take you." He reinforced that claim with mild rebuke for their unbelief and a reassurance that they were as secure in their relationship with the Father as they were in their relationship with the Son: "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him" (v. 7).

In a sense, the disciples did not know Jesus at all. If they had really known Him like they thought, they wouldn't have been worried about where the Father was.

They had some knowledge of who Jesus was. They had declared that He was Messiah, the Anointed One of God. Peter had even made the statement that He was the Son of the living God. They were very close to grasping fully the truth of His deity and beginning to understand the meaning of it. Nevertheless, they were still confused, so Jesus stated it in clearest possible language, terms that they could not possibly miss: "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him...He who has seen Me has seen the Father.... I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me" (vv. 7-10).

In other words, Jesus is saying, "if you really knew Me in depth, you would know the Father also. Your confusion about the Father means that there must be some gaps in your knowledge of Me." If they had really seen Jesus fully as God, they would not have had fears, doubts and questions about who the Father was and how to get to Him.

Remember, Jesus' words were meant to comfort them. They knew He loved them. He wanted them to know that God cared for them in the same way, because He and the Father are one. To have a relationship with one is to have a relationship with the other. That is an important, eternal principle. If you reject the Son, you have rejected the Father; and if you receive the Son you have received the

Father. The apostle John grasped this in its fullness, and it became a theme of his ministry. Years later, he wrote, "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also" (1 John 2:23).

But it appears that none of the disciples immediately understood the full import of what Jesus was telling them. His words, "From now on you know Him, and have seen Him" (v. 7) are more a prediction than a proclamation. "From now on" does not mean, "from this precise moment on," for they did not yet seem to grasp what He was saying. In fact, in the very next verse Philip proved he still didn't know who Jesus was in the full sense.

"You know Him, and have seen Him" does not mean that the opening of their understanding about God had actually been accomplished. Jesus, according to the idiom of His day, used the present tense to signify the ultimate certainty of what He was saying. The message to the disciples is, "Starting now, you are going to begin to understand." Through the events of the next forty days--the death of Jesus Christ, His resurrection, His ascension and the coming Holy Spirit--they would come to understand more fully about Jesus' person and His relationship to the Father.

And that is exactly what happened. Thomas, for example, had doubted the resurrection even after hearing eyewitness testimony, but when he saw Christ, finally, it all fell into place, and he understood who Jesus was. He looked at the risen Jesus and said, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

Philip's request in John 14:8, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us," proved that the disciples did not at this point see the full truth of who Jesus is. It was a shallow, faithless, ignorant thing to say, and it revealed his lack of understanding. His knowledge of God was incomplete. So he did what people have done throughout history: he asked to see.

Philip was trying to walk by sight rather than by faith. It wasn't enough for him to believe; he wanted to see something. It could be that he remembered the account of Exodus 33, when Moses was tucked in a rock and he saw the afterglow of God's glory pass by. Or maybe he recalled the words of Isaiah 40:5: "Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together."

Perhaps, but I don't think he was a biblical scholar at all. I think he was a faithless disciple who wanted sight to substitute for faith. We can understand his feelings. It would be a lot easier to tolerate Jesus' departure if they could first have a glimpse of the Father, just to make certain He really knew where He was going. It would be much easier to cling to Jesus' promise that He would come again to get them, if God could come and confirm it. If Jesus could do that, there would be no doubt about whether His claims were real. God Himself would be a guarantee that Jesus' pledge was secure.

It wasn't the first time Jesus had dealt with this same question. In John 8:19, some unbelieving Jews had asked, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you

knew Me, you would know My Father also."

Philip's question revealed his lack of faith, and Jesus gave him the same answer He had given the unbelieving Jews. Jesus said to Philip, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (v. 9). That was, of course, a rebuke to Philip, but I believe there was also pathos in the voice of Jesus. Can you imagine the heartbreak of Jesus after He had poured His life into these twelve men for three years, to know that one of them was a traitor, one of them a swearing denier, and the ten that were left were of little faith? It was the night before His death, and they still didn't really know who He was.

Imagine Philip, standing there staring Christ in the face and asking Him to show him God. Jesus' answer to him was, "Open your eyes. You've been looking at Me for three years." They who had seen Jesus had seen the visible manifestation of God. The writer of Hebrews says, "[Jesus Christ] is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature," or as the King James Version says, "the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3). The apostle Paul wrote, "He is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15), and "In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (2:9). Jesus is God.

It is easy to see how unbelievers might say what Philip did. But for him to ask to see the Father as proof of Jesus' claims doesn't make much sense. He and the other disciples had seen Jesus' works and heard His words for three years.

Anyone who has ever discipled another Christian must know something of what Jesus felt in the face of Philip's frustrating unbelief. But Jesus was not discouraged; He had gone as far as He could with the disciples, and now He was ready to turn them over to the Holy Spirit. That is a good principle to apply in discipleship.

Jesus' answer might not have seemed very satisfying to Philip, but it was exactly what Philip needed. Jesus didn't do any miracles for him or give him any great display of power; He simply commanded him to believe. "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves" (vv. 10-11). Philip asked for sight; Jesus told him to seek faith instead.

Christianity is all about believing. If you think the height of spirituality is to see miracles, hear the voice of God booming out of the ceiling, or experience some kind of supernatural phenomenon, you don't have a clue as to what believing God is all about. Satan can duplicate all those things in counterfeit. If you want manifestations or supernatural power, you can get them at a séance.

Christianity is walking by faith, not sight. I have never seen Jesus, never had a vision, never seen angelic hosts, never heard heavenly voices, and never been carried into the third heaven. Yet my spiritual eyes can see things that my physical eyes could never even conceive of. I don't want visions, miracles, and strange phenomena. I don't want superfantastic, ecstatic things to happen; I want one thing--I want what the disciples prayed for in Luke 17:5: "Increase our faith."

Faith is not as one little boy described it: "Believing in something you know ain't so." In fact, faith is just the opposite--believing in something you know is so. Genuine faith has an essential basis in fact.

The disciples certainly had a basis for their faith, and Jesus reemphasized that to Philip: "The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves" (vv. 10-11). If Philip and the others had truly been listening for the previous three years, if they had really paid attention to the works Jesus did, they would not have doubted now.

There is always a danger of doubting in the darkness things that we have seen clearly in the light. That's what the disciples were doing. During the three years of Jesus' earthly ministry they had repeatedly heard and seen proof that He was God incarnate. Now their faith was wavering, in spite of the solid, factual foundation upon which it was built. They had heard all His claims, all His teachings, all His insights probing into hidden truths, all His words revealing a supernatural knowledge of the human heart. He had answered questions that they had asked not with their lips, but in their hearts. And if His words were not sufficient proof, they had seen His works--His miracles, and His sinless life.

Philip's request to see God then was a gross display of unbelief. He didn't need to see anything; Jesus had proved that He was God. What more could He show them? He was God manifest. They had heard His words, beheld His works; witnessed His glory; observed His perfection; and experienced His love for them. How could they ask such a question now?

And so He reaffirmed to them the tremendous revelation that He is God. If they could grasp that truth, they could rest easy, knowing they were secure.

The Revelation of His Power

Next, He revealed to them the incredible resource of power they had available to them through Him. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father" (v. 12). Christians over the centuries have wondered at the richness of such a promise. What does it mean? How could anyone do greater works than Jesus had done? He had healed people blind from birth, cast out the most powerful

demons, and even raised a man from the dead after four days. What could possibly be greater than that?

The key to understanding this promise is in the last phrase of verse 12: "because I go to the Father." When Jesus went to the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit. He completely transformed the disciples from a fearful group of timid individuals to a collective force that reached the world with the gospel. The impact of their preaching exceeded even the impact of Jesus' preaching during His lifetime. Jesus had never preached outside Palestine. Within His lifetime Europe had never received the word of the gospel, but under the ministry of the disciples it had begun to spread, and it's still spreading today. Their works were greater than His, not in power, but in scope. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, each one of those disciples had access to power in dimensions they did not have even with the physical presence of Christ.

The disciples undoubtedly thought that, without Christ, they would be reduced to nothing. He was the source of their strength; how could they have power without Him? His promise was meant to ease those fears. If they felt secure in His presence, they would be even more secure, more powerful, able to do more, if He returned to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit.

The disciples had power to work great miracles--not greater than Christ's in power, but perhaps greater than His in scope. Acts 5 says that "At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people...they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them" (vv. 12, 15).

In Acts 2, Peter preached, and three thousand people were saved. That never happened during the ministry of Jesus. He never saw widespread revival. The gospel never went to the Gentiles in the time of Jesus, but through the works of His apostles, conversions took place everywhere.

And after all, the greatest spiritual miracle that God can perform is salvation. Every time we introduce someone to Jesus Christ, we are literally involved in what God is doing spiritually, and we are seeing things greater than even Jesus saw in His own day!

The Revelation of His Promise

Finally, Jesus gave them a promise meant to ease the grief they felt at His leaving: "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it" (vv. 13-14).

Jesus had fed them. He had helped them catch their fish. On one occasion He had even provided their tax money out of the mouth of a fish. He had supplied all their needs, but now He is leaving, and they must have wondered, How are we going to get a job? How are we going to fit back into society? What will we do without Him?

They had left everything and were completely without resources. Without Jesus, they would be all alone in a hostile world. Yet, He assured them, they did not need to worry about any of their needs. The gap between Him and them would be closed instantly as they prayed. Even though He would be absent, they would have access to all His supplies.

That is not *carte blanche* for every whim of the flesh. There's a qualifying statement repeated twice. He doesn't say, "I'll give you anything you ask for," but rather, "I'll do what you ask in My name." That does not mean that we can simply tack "in-Jesus'-name-amen" on the end of our prayer and expect an answer. This is not a little formula or abracadabra to use to get wishes granted.

The name of Jesus stands for all that He is. Throughout Scripture, God's names are the same as His attributes. When Isaiah prophesied that Messiah would be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6), he was not giving actual names, but rather an overview of Messiah's character. "I Am that I Am" is as much an affirmation of God's eternal nature as it is a name by which He is to be called.

So praying in the name of Jesus is more than merely mentioning His name in a prayer. If we truly pray in Jesus' name, we can pray only for that which is consistent with His perfect character, and for that which will bring glory to Him. It implies an acknowledgement of all that He has done and a submission to His will.

What it really means is that when we pray, we should pray as if Jesus Christ Himself were doing the asking. We approach the throne of the Father in full identification with the Son, seeking only what He would seek. When we pray with that perspective, we begin to pray for the things that really matter and eliminate selfish requests.

His promise when we pray that way is, "I will do it" (v. 14). That is a guarantee that within His will, we cannot lack anything! His concern for His own transcends all circumstances, so that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

That is the heart of Jesus' message of comfort to His terrified disciples, and it must have been tremendously reassuring to hear those words and ponder them. In the midst of the collapse of their dreams and hopes, He gave them Himself as a rock to which they could cling and under which they

could seek shelter.

He cares no less for those who are His disciples today. His promises are still valid; His power has not diminished; and His person is unchanging. We do not have the benefit of His physical presence, but we have His Spirit. And although we cannot see Jesus, we can sense His love for us as the Spirit shed it abroad in our hearts. In many ways, we know Him better than if we knew Him from His mere physical presence. As Peter wrote, "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

What a thrill it is to experience His love in this way, and what a comfort to know that He is God, and He cares for us!

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