

Do You Know My Jesus? Part 1

God is Like Jesus

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March 12, 2023 | danielr.net | northbroad.church

Do You Know My Jesus?

*Do you know my Jesus? Do you know my
friend, Have you heard He loves you, And
that He will abide till the end?¹*

I've known about Jesus since I was a baby. Mom, Grandmommy, and all of my Bible class teachers would sing songs, tell me stories, and read Bible passages about Jesus, son of Joseph and Mary, the Son of God. As I grew older, I began telling other people about Jesus too. Eventually, I became a minister of the gospel and started talking about Jesus in front of a congregation a couple of times every Sunday a few times throughout the week.

During my mid to early twenties, my relationship with Jesus could be described as “it’s complicated.” It wasn’t complicated because I **lost** faith in Jesus; it was complicated because I was **discovering** a new faith in Jesus! It felt like I was learning who Jesus was for the first time all over again. It was scary because I was wandering into unfamiliar territory. It was exciting because what I was learning in scripture was giving me a sense of peace and hope I had never experienced before. But it was also lonely because I didn’t know anyone else in my personal life who was seeing what I was beginning to see.

I went from knowing facts **about** Jesus to **knowing** Jesus.

This is the Jesus I want you to meet and fall in love with. I want you to be free to taste, see, feel, touch, and know Jesus as I have come to know him. I want to introduce you to a kind of grace that is transformative, creative, surprising, and **wild**. This kind of grace can’t be tamed! And I pray that this renewed relationship with Jesus will take hold of you and lead you into an amazing future of love for those around you, personal time of prayer and contemplation, and, above all, a close friendship with our Triune God.

¹ The chorus of “Do You Know My Jesus?” By Vespew Benton “Vep” Ellis (1917-1988)

God is Like Jesus

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

John 14:9

Let's start with this idea that God is like Jesus. That's an interesting statement, is it not? One would expect to read "Jesus is like God," but this particular ordering of the words is making an important theological statement expressed throughout scripture. In the book of John, Jesus has a conversation with his disciples about who he is. While there are other clear statements Jesus makes throughout this gospel account, the ones in John chapters 14-17 are the most plain.

After promising his disciples a place in his Father's house, Thomas asks Jesus to show him the way. Let's read this interaction together:

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." (John 14:5-7)

What an astounding statement! While John also reported that no one had ever seen the Father at any time, Jesus says that we can now see the Father!² Phillip had the same response to this that may be in your mind, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied" (John 14:8). That's when Jesus gives a reply that is one of the sources for the title of this sermon:

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever 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, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. (John 14:9-10)

If we want to see the Father, all we have to do is look at Jesus. I think this is what the Bible means when it says that we can see God face to face. I don't believe that this is something reserved for our time in heaven; I think this is a blessing we can have now through Jesus. You see, this kind of relationship with God had never been possible before. All previous revelations were insufficient in bringing the people into a face to face relationship with the Father.

As John said in the opening pages of his gospel account, "The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (John 1:17-18). Other versions say, "Jesus explained him." I want to introduce Jesus to you is so that you can

² John 1:18

come to know the Father, and if this will be as transformative for you as it has been for me, the effect on our congregation and our community will be beyond imagination.

Previous Revelations are Inadequate

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son...He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being...
Hebrews 1:1–3

A few weeks ago, Jeremy and I were riding his buggy around his farm. He had recently installed some new lights on his buggy, and the contrast was incredible. The picture on the left shows the old lights, while the picture on the right shows the new lights.



For over a year, I had been in the “beast buggy” as both a passenger and a driver, and during that entire time I felt like the lights were pretty good. You could see well enough to get around and spot the occasional critter, but now that I’ve seen what the trails look like with these new lights, it’s a wonder we ever got around with the old ones! While the previous lights accomplished their purpose, I wasn’t aware of what was possible until I saw the trail in light of the new hardware.

Paul said something similar about his relationship with the Hebrew Scriptures in 2 Corinthians 3:

...who has made us qualified to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stone tablets, came in glory so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses's face because of the glory of his face, a glory now set aside, how much more will the ministry of the Spirit come in glory? (2 Corinthians 3:6-8)

Paul calls the Law the “letter that kills” and the “ministry of death.” While it was glorious, the ministry of Spirit, which gives life, is much more glorious. Like the lights on Beast Buggy, the Law served its purpose and was glorious, but it pales in comparison to the revelation of God through Jesus. Paul continues,

For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of justification abound in glory! Indeed, what once had glory has in this respect lost its glory because of the greater glory, for if what was set aside came through glory, much more has the permanent come in glory! (2 Corinthians 3:9-11)

The Law was inspired by God, delivered by angels, and written on tablets of stone, but Paul's view of the ministry of Jesus was much greater. It's not that Paul had a “low view” of the Hebrew Scriptures; it's that he had an extremely “high view” of the ministry of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with complete frankness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, the same veil is still there; it is not unveiled since in Christ it is set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds, but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. (2 Corinthians 3:12-16)

While Paul only had access to the old covenant scriptures, it was as if a veil was over his face. Yes, they had glory, but seeing the scriptures through the lens of Christ opened up a whole new way of viewing the Law, the promises, and the prophecies within the Hebrew Scriptures. The Jews in Beroea searched the scriptures daily because the excitement of viewing them in a whole new way overtook them and they couldn't put them down!

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

The ministry of condemnation, ministry of death, and the lesser glory of the Law is outshined by the life, freedom, and face to face relationship the ministry of the Spirit reveals. God spoke to the ancestors through various means, but now he speaks to us in the person of his Son, Jesus the Christ.

Jesus Explains God

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father; He has explained Him. John 1:18 (NASB)

The gospel account of John opens with a description of Jesus as the “Word” of God. That is Jesus is the ultimate expression of who God is. He is the exact representation of God’s character and very being. If we want to know the Father, we can look at the Son. Scripture is valuable, and scripture is inspired by God, but scripture is not the word of life; Jesus is the Word of life. Jesus said, “You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39–40).

In John 1:17-18 in the NRSV, John writes,

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’”) From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known. (John 1:14–18)

When we look at the Son, we see the Father, but when we look at the Son, we see a Being that is “full of grace and truth” which means that God is full of grace and truth. Truly, Jesus has made God known! It was his relationship with the Father before the world began that enabled Jesus to reveal God in such a perfect way.

We have often seen that popular slogan: WWJD? According to Jesus himself, whatever we see him doing is what the Father has always been doing: “Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own but only what he sees the Father doing, for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise” (John 5:19).

So when we read about Jesus’s life, teaching, desires, and even his death, we are seeing a picture of who God is, of who God has always been. Jesus isn’t making things up as he goes

along; he is showing us the Father himself. Every act of compassion, every rebellion against the religious tradition of the elders, every word out of his mouth is an explanation of who God is!

Brian Zahnd wrote, “God is like Jesus. God has always been like Jesus. There has never been a time when God was not like Jesus; we haven’t always known this, but now we do. God is like Jesus!”³ Over the next few sermons, we will be looking at who Jesus is by considering his relationship to the ancient traditions, his compassion, his wrath, and his crucifixion. Along the way, we will be growing closer to our Father in heaven as well!

Do you know my Jesus? My prayer is that you will have a glimpse of him by the time this series is over!

³Zahnd, Brian. *Sinners in the Hands of a Loving God* (p. 9). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.