

Thinking About God - 5

God Revealed Through Jesus

Some years ago I was shown photographs of an event at work. I remembered the occasion, but looked long and hard at one of the people in the picture. I was positive my father had not been there, although he had visited on more than one occasion.

Then it suddenly dawned on me, I was not looking at my father at all; I was looking at myself, a picture taken from an angle I would not see in a mirror. It was a bit of a shock; did I really look that old? I began to realise the truth of what people had told me for a long time, that I was just like my dad, a real 'chip off the old block'!

The tale has its funny side, and could be repeated many times over, but it also helps us to understand how we can appreciate God through His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Showing the Father

Philip, one of the twelve disciples, asked Jesus a question. *"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us"* (John 14:8).

Jesus had been telling the twelve that he was going to his Father. The crucifixion was getting near, the resurrection and ascension would not be far away. So the reply Jesus gave to Philip's question is very interesting:

Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (v9).

Jesus seems almost surprised. Philip and his fellow disciples had not realised that they did not need to ask to see his Father. All they could understand about God had been shown to them by the Lord Jesus himself. Jesus continues:

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 authority, but the Father who dwells in me does His works (v10).

Jesus is not saying that he and his Father are one person; but he is explaining that they are so alike that when you have seen one, you have seen the other. This is just as with human fathers and sons.

A Close Relationship

This closeness of Jesus and his Father is a theme which runs throughout John's gospel. It is there at the start.



In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God: and the word was God... And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw the glory of it, as the only begotten son of the father, which word was full of grace and verity (John 1:1, 14; Tyndale's Translation).

Note that John is very careful in what he says and does not say. He emphasizes that the Lord God and His Son, Jesus Christ, are so alike that to see one is to see the other. He does not say that they are the same person, or both are part of a trinity of persons. Such ideas are totally foreign to the gospels.

This fits with what Jesus himself says about their relationship:

I and the Father are one (John 10:30).

Again, he is not suggesting that he and the Lord God are the same person, but that they are 'at one'; they have a unity of purpose, a oneness of mind and spirit which is the sort of unity he would also like his disciples to have.

I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one... That they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:11, 21).

Jesus is quite specific, that the oneness he claims for himself and his Father can also be achieved by his followers: indeed he prays that they will reach that same level of unity. He is

not by any stretch of the imagination suggesting that he and his Father are the same person.

God is Greater Than All

Earlier in the gospel of John, Jesus had said:

Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise (John 5:19).

He stressed this again later:

I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of Him who sent me" (v30).

Elsewhere he declared:

My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand (John 10:29).

He is including himself in this. God is greater than all, even than Jesus. But the Lord Jesus reveals what his Father is like. This is reflected in the teaching of the apostles after the ascension of the Lord Jesus, as they preached his message:

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God (1 Corinthians 11:3).

A Living Picture

The New Testament paints a picture of Jesus as the revelation of his Father. If we see him, we see all we can compre-

hend about the Father, and like Philip we have no need to see God Himself.

What does the picture show? One who was kind and compassionate, yes, but one who consistently upheld the standards of behaviour expected by his Father, prepared to suffer a cruel death on the cross to provide a way of redemption for his followers. One whose main motivation during his life was to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God.

All that Jesus did shows what his Father is like, so that reading the gospel accounts of his life can bring us nearer to a true understanding of the Lord God. This message is continued

by the apostles later on. The Apostle Paul writes to believers in Colosse:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation... For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross (Colossians 1:15, 19-20).

Mark Sheppard

*Bible Quotations from the English
Standard Version*

Like Him

“We shall be like him.” O how rich the promise;
What greater could the Father’s love prepare?
Few are the words, and softly are they spoken,
But who shall tell the blessings hidden there?

“We shall be like him” – pure in heart, and sinless;
But his redeeming mercy ends not there;
These bodies like to his shall then be fashioned,
And we his resurrection glory share.

“We shall be like him” – raised above all weakness,
For ever past all weariness and pain;
Even death itself shall have no power to reach us
When with our risen Lord we live and reign.

So in the hope of bearing his bright image,
Rejoicing in his present gift of grace,
His love shall keep our hearts in patient waiting
Till we in glorious beauty see his face.

Charles Joseph Caldicott

By courtesy of ‘The Christadelphian’