

Seeing the Invisible God

A Brief Explanation of the Incarnation

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This paper was written as a response to those who say that the Father and Jesus are two distinct divine beings or persons.

IN THE MIDST OF HIS TRIAL, suffering Job declared, "This I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:26).

But surely Job was mistaken. Doesn't the Bible teach that the Eternal God is invisible to mortal man? Didn't John plainly state, "No one has seen God at any time" (1 John 4:12)? According to the Bible, the reason God cannot be seen is because "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). And as Jesus Himself said, "A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:39).

There is nothing about the Divine Spirit that is visible to the eyes of man. This is why Paul declares: "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17). Clearly the one true and living God described in the Bible is a Spirit which cannot be seen.

Having established this truth, we must now consider what the Bible also says. Jesus Himself made the statement, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). If you are wondering how both of these declarations can be true, how God can be simultaneously visible and invisible, then you must understand that the explanation can only be found by examining the Scriptures.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul has provided the key to reconciling these two seemingly contradictory ideas. The apostle writes, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20).

In other words, Paul says that even though God cannot be seen through direct observation, He can be seen, even clearly seen, by that which He has made. This is because by faith we understand that "the things which are seen were not made of

things which are visible (Hebrews 11:3). That is to say, when God brought the material world into existence, that which could not be seen became visible. What then has God made that makes it possible for us to see His invisible Spirit, His eternal power and Godhead?

The answer is, His Son. You see, nearly two thousand years ago an angel appeared to a young maiden in Israel and told her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). The reason this Child was to be called the Son of God was because His fathering was being done by the Holy Spirit, which is the manifested presence of the same God Jesus referred to as His Father.

This Son to be born was the One spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, who declared, Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). This word Immanuel is translated God with us (Matthew 1:23). The prophet also foretold, For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). How was it that the Son, this Child who was to be born of a virgin, could be called Mighty God and Everlasting Father? It was because the invisible God had determined to make Himself visible so that we, along with Job, could see Him.

The Incarnation

What we now call the Incarnation (the taking on of human flesh) did not actually occur until over seven hundred years after the prophecies of Isaiah had been published. But finally, when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman... (Galatians 4:4).

This One who was sent forth by God was the Child who was born, the Man we know as Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As the Son, He was made like all the descendants of Adam —of the dust of the earth. He was part of the things that were made. Yet in Him the invisible God could be clearly seen, for Paul writes, Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). The Amplified Bible says that God was made visible in human flesh. This is the Incarnation.

The reason God can be clearly seen in this Man named Jesus is because in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9). What's more, He is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person (Hebrews 1:3), the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). An image is something that can

be seen, either in the mind's eye as a mental image or through physical eyes as a material image.

Idolaters of every generation have been proficient at making images out of wood and stone to represent the gods they have vainly imagined in their minds. But the invisible God has no such image, for we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising (Acts 17:29). No, the true God has a living image, one fearfully and wonderfully made in the womb of a woman by divine hands. This image is the Man called by Peter the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16).

Not only does this Man reveal God in a visible form, but He also serves as the Mediator between the invisible Holy God and sinful humanity, for Paul has also written, There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:5-6). In Him we can find peace with God, for God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them (2 Corinthians 5:19). And you, Paul proclaims, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight (Colossians 1:21-22).

The Plan Fulfilled

Some have mistakenly suggested that prior to His birth, the Son of God existed as a separate Divine Being along with the invisible God. But this idea finds no support in the Scriptures, for the Bible teaches that the Son preexisted His birth only in prophetic anticipation; that is, the Bible tells us that even before He laid the foundations of the world, God planned that He would one day walk the earth as a Man, the Son, and would sacrifice His own body and shed His own blood for the sins of man (Acts 20:28). He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Peter 1:20).

This plan, which the Bible calls the Word, was in God's heart and mind from the beginning, for in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1). The Word was God's own image of Himself; it was His plan for revealing Himself to His creation. He thought this plan out in advance. He purposed it in His heart. He anticipated it. He could foresee it happening. Then, when the time was right, He put His plan into action.

As He declared in days of old, Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it (Isaiah 46:11). The Eternal Spirit, the unique Divine Being who created all things, the invisible God we call the Father, entered

into His own creation as a visible human being. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him (John 1:10-11). Very few were able to see the God who dwelled in the Man, Jesus Christ. When Philip asked, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us," Jesus answered, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). The only way anyone will ever see God the Father is by seeing the Man.

According to John, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18). The Amplified Bible says that the Son has "brought Him out where He can be seen." It is the Son, the Man, who enables us to see the invisible God. "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also" (1 John 2:23).

Understanding the relationship between the Father and the Son, that is, between the invisible Spirit and the visible Man, is the key to developing keen spiritual eyesight. The Father and the Son are not two distinct Divine Beings at all, for the Bible states plainly that "GOD IS ONE" (Galatians 3:20). The Eternal Spirit is a single Divine Being who indwells and manifests Himself through a uniquely conceived human being called the Son. We see here two distinct natures, one human and one divine, but not two distinct Divine Beings. If you can grasp this marvelous truth, you will ultimately be able to rightly divide the entire Word of God.

Eyes of Faith

The Bible suggests that Moses grasped this truth even though during His lifetime the Son had not as yet been born. The Bible says, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27). What was it that enabled Moses to see the invisible God? The Bible teaches that it was His faith, for faith is "the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Moses acted upon what he believed to be true. When God instructed him to do something, Moses did it. When God told him to slay a lamb for the Passover, by the hand of Moses the lamb was slain.

Perhaps Moses was able to see in that sacrificial lamb a faint glimmer of the glorious plan that God had yet to bring forth. Perhaps he realized that this lamb was but the shadow of better things to come, Jesus Christ Himself being the very substance; for when Jesus presented Himself to Israel, John the Baptist declared, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

And after His death and resurrection, Paul wrote, "Indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). And in the Revelation, John describes Christ as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Obviously Christ was not literally slain until He died on Calvary, but in the heart of God He had been slain since the worlds were created –because that was the plan.

Those of us alive today, though we may have a burning desire to feast our eyes upon Him, have not been granted the same privilege granted the disciples. We have not actually seen Jesus in the flesh. Though John, looking back, could describe Him as the One "which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon" (1 John 1:1), we can see Him only through eyes of faith, as we look ahead in eager anticipation of the "glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). On that day, like John, "we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

But before that day arrives, we must endeavor to behold our invisible God in His Word, for the Bible says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). This flesh, which the apostle goes on to describe as "the only begotten of the Father," is clearly referring to the Son, the Word of God incarnate.

Today, though the Son of God is no longer with us in the flesh, the Bible says that God has "in due time manifested His Word through preaching" (Titus 1:3). In other words, though we may not have the Son to feast our eyes upon, we do have a bountiful banquet of the Word set before us. To see the Son and thereby see the invisible God, we must endeavor to hear and receive the truths of God's Word with a pure heart, ready and eager to do the will of God. By acting on what we hear and believe, we too will be able to see the same God the disciples saw, albeit through spiritual eyes.

But which is really more important: that we see God through natural eyes or that we see Him through eyes of faith? There were many who saw Jesus in the flesh yet did not acknowledge Him as God. They were the ones of whom He said, "Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive" (Matthew 13:14). But to those who did acknowledge Him He said, "Blessed are your eyes for they see...for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it" (vv.16-17). The truly important thing is that we acknowledge the Man, Jesus, as the invisible God who has become manifest in the flesh that we may see Him.

In spite of what we might sometimes think, the disciples who saw Jesus in the flesh were not more blessed than we are, even though the best we can do is strive to see Him through the eyes of our understanding; for Jesus told Thomas, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Paul declared that as New Testament believers, "we

walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). This, he explained, is because we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

The people in ancient Israel saw Jesus in the flesh only temporarily, but if our faith is genuine and our spiritual eyesight clear, we shall see Him both now and for eternity. We are therefore exhorted to run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus began our faith and we must look to Him to complete it. There ought to be something deep within every one of us that cries out like Job, If my flesh I shall see God. How my heart yearns within me! The Bible assures us that to those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation (Hebrews 9:28).

Dear reader, I pray that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith; the salvation of your souls ” (1 Peter 1:7-9).

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.